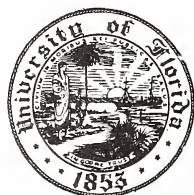


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PARIS OF TROY




by
GEORGE BAKER



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NOTE

The period of this story is about 1200 B.C. The characters in it, if they ever lived, have been dead for three thousand years. No reference is made or intended, even by allegory, to any living person. I am indebted to Messrs. J. M. Dent for their kind permission to quote from Rawlinson's translation of "The History of Herodotus" in their Everyman Library.

Chapter One

WE LEFT TROY BY THE SOUTH-EASTERN GATE SOON after sunrise. Young Aeneas rode by my side, holding himself stiffly; this was his first expedition of any real account. For a child of eleven he rode well enough; he had light hands, and seemed to understand his pony. I could see the flash and sparkle of his eyes as we faced the newly risen sun, although he tried to keep his elation to himself; only an occasional deep sigh, and a peculiar twitch of his slender shoulders, betrayed his eager heart.

Of course I didn't let him see that I was watching; he clearly wanted to show how well he had benefited by my teaching. We struck across the plain, meaning to cross the Scamander near Cebren. Here it was higher, and the marshlands left behind. After its junction with the Simois the river is rather depressing, particularly near its mouth, although the women say its waters are good for the hair. I prefer clean water; but then I've never had much vanity. I suppose a soldier's life leaves little room for that.

The intense solemnity of the occasion kept Aeneas rather quiet at first. Our expedition was nothing very much; we were riding to Mount Ida, with the idea of climbing the lower slopes beyond Cebren. But we should lie that night at a herdsman's hut, far from the shelter of the city walls; and that, to a boy who until a few months before had been

brought up among women, was the very soul of high adventure.

Since Anchises, the boy's father, had given me the charge of his only son until he was old enough to go to Cheiron in Thessaly, he had agreed, though with some misgiving, to the journey. There was no danger: Pielus, my old soldier servant, had been out with a few men and had declared the countryside free from roving bands. But I hadn't told Aeneas so.

By noon the green slopes of Ida were much clearer. We turned aside, and found a stream that ran through a copse. We tethered the horses — young as he was, Aeneas knew his pony's due — and we sat down in the shade to a meal of fruit and cakes. I had a small skin of wine, and the stream water was fresh and clear. The boy sat silent for a while, looking about him with a shrewd, observant glance that was already characteristic. Presently he heaved a deep, contented sigh.

"Achates, I shall soon be a soldier, shan't I?" he said. He looked at my sword, and then at me. "How soon shall I be able to carry arms — real arms?" he went on, regarding his little bow with some distaste.

"You should be able to handle a spear in about seven years," I replied. He sprang to his feet.

"Seven years!" he cried. "But that's simply ages."

I nodded, and said, "Pick up my sword."

He drew the short, heavy weapon from its scabbard.

"Hold it above your head until I tell you to lower it."

With a slight effort he raised it. In a few seconds his arm began to tremble; his face reddened with effort, and his breath came quickly. But his endurance surprised me; I thought I had the measure of his strength to a moment. Per-

haps I had; it was the iron will and indomitable resolution I had failed to value.

I nodded, anxious to spare him the bitterness of defeat. Even then he held the sword a few moments more above his head; then, slowly and evenly, he lowered it, at full stretch of his arm, until the point rested lightly on the grass at his feet.

The gesture delighted me.

And there you have Aeneas.

* * * * *

We rode on. With every hour we put between ourselves and the city his spirits rose; he laughed and chattered like the child he really was. But he never forgot that the journey was part of his training as a prince and a soldier. His quick glance missed nothing, and his comments were shrewd.

There was a rude sort of cottage at the edge of a deep wood on the lowest slope of the mountain, where I planned to spend the night. The herdsman who lived there with his wife was known to me, and Pielus had arranged our coming, or we might not have supped so well; as it was a kid steeped in milk, some small cakes and fruit were set before us. The herdsman's wife would have fussed over Aeneas, had not the old man muttered to her that the boy was not to be treated so. Aeneas had been in the saddle most of the day, and was soon asleep on the low couch piled with skins that had been prepared for him. Archelaus and I sat in the doorway, and evening came down on the Trojan plain. The stars came out, slowly at first, then by constellations; the woman Rhodope watched sleeping Aeneas hungrily, her hands folded in her lap, as Archelaus told of the days

of old Laomedon, long dead, and the coming of Heracles to Troy.

"I saw him once, before the war: they'd chosen the king's daughter Hesione to sacrifice to the monster, and Laomedon was almost out of his wits. Heracles said he'd kill the thing, whatever it was: for payment he wanted six white horses of the famous breed. Little enough, against the life of such a girl as Hesione."

Archelaus paused, and stared out at the darkened plain. "Of course, it was bound to happen, with such a man as Heracles: Laomedon might have known. But when the monster turned out to be no more than a big crocodile — though how it came to Ilion the gods know — he refused Heracles the horses. Heracles didn't say a word: just turned his great back on the king, and walked out. And — nobody got in his way."

He paused again. The dogs were cracking bones. Aeneas stirred, and Rhodope moved silently to him in the shadows; she pulled the warm fleece up to his chin.

"Six small ships!" muttered the old herdsman. "Six ships, and a handful of men. But he took the city — may the gods blast his soul!"

I said nothing. The only son of the old couple had died in that battle, twenty years before, slain by Heracles himself. Something of Archelaus had died with him.

"It would have been better to have left her to the crocodile," he went on, "for after the city was taken she was given to Heracles' armor bearer, a man named Telamon. They took her back to Achaia, and she's not been heard of since. Laomedon dead: the soldiers and the people mostly, dead: the city sacked and burned and ruined: Hesione carried away beyond the seas. And all for the sake of a few white horses.

Priam had advised his father to pay; Heracles spared him. That's how he came to the throne. But he's never forgiven the Achaians; and if ever he could do them a hurt, I think he would."

I had heard the tale before, from my father. He had hurried us out of Troy — I was only five at the time — and we had been far away when the six ships beached. He also had seen Heracles' eyes after he'd been refused the horses. We had stayed in Antandros while a new city rose to a larger plan; my father had expressed approval of the fortifications. The new Troy was twice the size of the former city, and its stout, high walls and towers made it almost impregnable.

Then Priam had married Hecuba, daughter of a Phrygian prince; Hector had been born, and then the lady Ilione. At least —

The dogs bounded up suddenly, barking; they rushed out into the dark. Archelaus stood up, listening, and I loosened my sword in its scabbard. The barking had changed to yelps of frenzied welcome somewhere behind the house, and a clear, pleasant voice hailed them.

"What, Avanus, not forgotten me, then?"

Archelaus relaxed, and Rhodope released an indrawn breath.

"Alexander!" she murmured. The old man went out; Rhodope lit a torch from the fire, and hung it on the wall. I drew nearer to Aeneas and waited, watching and alert.

Archelaus came in, beaming. "They've both come down, Mother," he said. He was followed by a tall, good-looking young fellow who kissed Rhodope affectionately. Vaguely he reminded me of someone, especially when his white teeth shone as he smiled. I was puzzling over this fancied resemblance, and scarcely noticed the girl who stood rather shyly

in the doorway. As he turned to her he saw me, and his quick, bright eyes flashed with surprise.

"This is the lord Achates," said Rhodope quickly, "and the child is Aeneas, son of Anchises the prince. Lord Achates, this is our — our son, Alexander. And his wife, Oenone."

Again I overlooked the girl, studying Alexander. I did not know that another son had been born to the couple, nor had Pielus mentioned the fact. And he certainly took after neither of them. I glanced at Archelaus, and saw in his eyes warning, and appeal.

"Alexander, our son," he repeated, proudly; and the boy laughed.

"Your being here may save me a lecture, lord Achates," he said, "for this is my first visit since Oenone and I were wed. But we have herds to tend, and can't get away much. Also — " He turned with a smile to his young wife. "Time passes so quickly — "

Oenone flashed an answering smile at him, and I regarded her with more attention. Her eyes were wide and dark; her dark hair hung long and loose; it seemed to possess the peculiar shifting quality of long-leaved water-flowers in some deep, swift-moving stream. She was very beautiful: even in the smoky light of the single torch so much was clear. Also she was very much in love, and very happy.

Then she looked full at me. I had a swift impression of sunshine glinting on a polished rock in some deep pool as the fire gleamed in her eyes — and I went down before her beauty as a drowning man, gasping in an icy sea, powerless and bewildered.

Alexander was leaning over Aeneas; he looked for a long time at the flushed, sleeping face.

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"He is very beautiful," he said. "So he is the son of Prince Anchises? I have heard —"

"Have you supped?" broke in Archelaus, so abruptly that I knew that the secret of the boy's parentage was known to both of them. Anchises was as vain as he was handsome; and in his day he had no rival in Ilion. He claimed that the boy was of no common parentage; to his intimates he said that the mother was Aphrodite. This preposterous story originated in his own mind from a mere figure of speech; I believe the truth was that he met a singularly lovely damsel on Ida, who had the sense to lay the consequence literally at his door. But the story had lost nothing in repetition; and certainly Aeneas had beauty enough to give it an appearance of confirmation.

A meal was set before Alexander and Oenone; Rhodope poured wine for us all from a big earthen jar. My presence was explained, and Alexander, a friendly soul, immediately asked me to go with them next morning as far as their new home. I suspect he was rather proud of it; and as I wanted nothing more than to stay near Oenone, I agreed at once. So far Oenone had not spoken to me; she neither sought nor avoided my attention. I was content merely to watch her, and listen to her clear, low voice as she answered her chattering husband. Alexander was in great spirits; he radiated vitality, and had a personal charm I have seldom seen equalled. I did not wonder that Oenone loved him; in a short time I, wary and suspicious of all men, was completely under his spell.

While Rhodope prepared beds Archelaus and I took a turn out in the cool night air. He made no attempt to explain Alexander, but told me proudly of the boy's remarkable reputation among the king's herdsmen. He was, it appeared,

strong and skillful; wolves never took toll of his herd, and his wisdom and sound commonsense had raised him to the eminence of a local oracle. He had been married only a short time; Oenone came from the Cebren district; it was said that she had the second sight. That, remembering her wonderful eyes, I could easily believe.

"He's been a good son to us," Archelaus said. "If he's as good to her — but, of course, they're very young. He's eighteen; and I should think she's a year or so less."

We were up with the sun next morning. Aeneas was surprised to find a stranger near him when he woke; Oenone had gone down to the stream, and when she returned Aeneas and Alexander were fast friends. Aeneas spoke to her with grave courtesy; I think he felt, as I did, that these two were somehow more than herdkeepers, and readily accepted Alexander as his equal. Alexander responded without constraint or subservience, and I found it impossible to believe that he was born of slaves, himself a slave. Nor, I was sure, did Oenone believe it: she, who would have graced a palace. And that faint elusive resemblance still troubled me.

We left the horses with Archelaus and climbed the steepening slopes on foot. Alexander led the way, Aeneas talking and laughing at his side; Oenone walked with me. I pointed down a long cleft in the mountainside: far away the sea glowed deeply blue.

"I spent my boyhood in Antandros," I remarked.

"I have seen it from the mountain," Oenone said, "but I've never been nearer. Do you live there now?"

"No; I did before I went abroad, eight years ago; but since I came back I've been living in Troy."

"You must have seen a good many cities, and had lots of adventures."

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"Enough to make me glad of this peace."

"I have never been inside a town; I am happier in the woods, or on the mountain."

"You are very wise, I think. One could be very happy here. I envy — your husband."

Oenone laughed. "You have learned flattery in your travels," she said. "Our life is very pleasant; I'm glad Alex is not ambitious. Not that it would matter much if he were, because he can never be more than a herdsman."

"Have you known him long?"

"Oh, no; we met on the mountain, and were wed soon after."

"I have known his father for some years, but this is the first time I've heard of Alexander. He's not very much like either of them, is he?"

Oenone halted on the narrow path and faced me.

"Lord Achates," she said, slowly, "you don't believe he is the son of Archelaus and Rhodope, do you? I have seen it in your eyes as you looked from him to them. Well, neither do I. But although I have known him only a short time, I am quite sure that you would do him no service by proving him nobly born — if indeed he is. As a herdsman he has friends, reputation and contentment; we live hard, but we have no enemies; nobody is jealous of our lot, and we are happy. But if he were other than a herdsman —" she paused, frowning a little. "Please say no more of this — especially to him," she added.

"You speak always of him; have you no dreams of your own?"

Oenone flushed, and smiled. "Only one," she said, softly. "And sometimes I am afraid I shall wake; for I live it every day."

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Their cottage was small and simple, but very pleasantly set at the foot of a wooded slope. There were flowers on the stone walls, and in a little garden they had planted before the hide-hung door. A small stream tumbled noisily among big, flat stones nearby; across a broad stretch of plain the walls and towers of Troy showed faintly white, and to the south the sea glanced from Antandros over a long shoulder of the mountain. Very peaceful and still and remote; more and more I envied Alexander.

I paid several visits to the young couple in the months that followed, sometimes with Aeneas as a pretext, but later more often alone. I do not know if Oenone guessed why I came; I am sure Alexander did not. I did myself no good, except to gratify my longing to be near her; it was very clear that he was all her life, and that she would look at no other man while he lived. Often I swore, on the way back, never to see her again; yet within a day or two I was looking for another excuse, however flimsy, to ride out to Ida.

They always made me welcome, taking some pleasure in hearing — Alexander especially — of places I had seen and battles in which I had played some part. I told them, too, of life in Troy, hoping, I believe, that somehow a miracle would happen, and that the mystery of Alexander's parentage would be cleared up, and that they would come to Troy. For I was foolish enough to think I knew better than Oenone what was best for Alexander. As this subject made her anxious and uneasy, however, I didn't dwell on it much. I fell naturally into the role of friend and confidant; how much so I didn't realize until Alexander told me about a vivid dream he'd had a night or two before.

"Have you heard of a man called Peleus?" he asked.

I nodded. "King of the Myrmidons of Phthiotis in east-

ern Achaia. He's said to have married a sea-nymph — ”

“Would her name be Thetis?”

“Yes. About ten years ago, if I remember.”

“Ten years! Oh, well, they say time on Olympus moves differently from ours. It was rather a special wedding, wasn't it?”

“I wasn't there, but I've heard it was a very splendid occasion.” He nodded; his eyes were dancing and eager, and bright with restless excitement. I glanced at Oenone; it seemed to me that she was slightly uneasy, for she watched him with anxious eyes.

“The messenger of the gods, Hermes, told me all about it in a dream. I'd never heard of either of them in my waking hours. He said that all the gods and goddesses were at the wedding, except Eris. Who's she, by the way?”

“Goddess of Discord. Go on!”

“I thought so. Well, she was hurt, he said, at being left out, and properly put the wolf among the yearlings by tossing one of the golden Hesperian apples into the hall where the goddesses were sitting. It was inscribed ‘For the fairest,’ and you can imagine how frigidly polite to each other they were as they made their claims. Most of them were soon frozen out; but when he'd whittled them down to three, Zeus gave it up. I mean, one of them was his wife, one his daughter Athene, and the other his light-o'-love, Aphrodite. Of course Hermes told the tale very discreetly; but there was a twinkle in his eye . . . And they've not settled it yet.”

As he paused — “A very odd dream,” I remarked. “Was there any more?”

“Oh, yes; you haven't heard the best bit. They decided to go to arbitration; and who should they choose for the invidious job but me!”

I laughed, and turned to Oenone. "Has your cooking anything to do with this?" I asked. She bridled indignantly. "Certainly not!" she said. "Nobody could cook so badly as all that. And I cook very nicely — don't I?"

I hastened to agree, and Alexander laughed. "Touched her on a tender spot," he observed. "We made that waterfall out of her first cakes."

Oenone grimaced at him and turned to me. "Do you believe him?" she asked, ominously.

"Certainly not!" I assured her, hastily; and she nodded.

"If you had, you'd have gone supperless to bed," she announced. "As it is, you can go and bring in some pine logs for the fire."

I rose obediently, and went out. Alexander came with me. "Do you think there's anything in that dream?" he asked. "It sounds a bit preposterous; I don't know that I really believe in the gods at all — do you? But it's queer that I should know about Peleus and Thetis; I'll swear I'd never heard of them before."

"That's the thing that puzzles me," I replied. "But strange things do happen in dreams. If the delectable trio should come to you for judgment, I'll begin to believe there is something in it."

Alexander laughed. "Hermes mentioned that they'd be coming within three nights," he said. "If they don't come tonight I'll know it was — only a dream. But it's rather exciting, don't you think?"

"Is it? There are many things I'd prefer to dream about."

"Achates, your mind runs on war and bloodshed. I believe you worship your battleaxe."

I laughed. "More deserving of reverence than any of your precious Olympians," I returned. "It has at least saved my

life several times over; which is more than the gods would have done if I hadn't had it handy."

As we returned with the logs: "This scoffer doesn't believe in the gods," Alexander remarked. "He says he'd rather dream about — lots of other things."

"Oh?" said Oenone, with interest. "What do you dream about, Achates?"

"His battleaxe," said Alexander, promptly. "No, he doesn't, by Zeus! Look, Oenone; can I be mistaken — or is it possible that our stonyhearted warrior is actually going red in the face? Achates, we demand her name!"

"What a pity to disappoint you!" I replied, lightly. "Oenone, we can't do that; shall I tell him I dream about you?"

Alexander laughed uproariously; but Oenone flashed a swift, searching glance at me. I think she read something in my eyes that I didn't intend her to see; for she lowered her gaze, and quietly began to set out the supper. We spoke no more of my dreams.

* * * * *

I was awakened next morning by an unusual bustle in the cottage.

"Look at the sun!" yelled Alexander. "We've overdone it properly! Oenone, you've moved my spear; I'll swear I put it — oh, no, here it is. See you presently, darling — I must rush, or the cows will think I'm dead."

I grinned, and stretched comfortably; suddenly I thought of something, and shouted after him: "Alex! What did you dream about?"

My words produced a sudden stillness. Then —

"Oh!" I heard him say; then he poked a grinning head through the curtain.

"Goddesses!" he announced, with satisfaction. "They came, Achates! Now what have you to say?"

I raised myself on one elbow. "I hope you uttered a fair and impartial judgment."

His eyes widened. "That's the last thing they wanted," he told me. "Achates, you wouldn't believe the way they tried to outbid each other; absolutely shameless. Hera offered me power and honor and kingship; Athene mentioned military glory; and Aphrodite — I gave the apple to her because when she smiled her nose crinkled just like Oenone's — promised me the fairest woman in the world to wife. A little late; I suppose they haven't told her about Oenone."

I lay back and laughed. "The inconsequence of your judgment is worthy of an Olympian," I observed. "Now go and milk your poor miserable cows, or I'll tell the king."

"Stay until tonight, and I'll tell you all about it — in detail," he said. Lowering his voice, "They hadn't a stitch between them," he added.

I yawned ostentatiously. "Neither had my battleaxe," I remarked, "and I shall not wait to hear your scandalous stories. What will Oenone say?"

Alexander grinned. "Shan't tell her that bit," he replied; and vanished precipitately.

Chapter Two

AENEAS WAS GROWING QUICKLY. ANCHISES TOOK GREAT delight in his son's progress, and spoke a good deal of the great future he hoped for the young prince. I shared his admiration for the youngster, for I have never known such a likable boy. He was popular with the rather exclusive young sons of Priam; Hector, though some years older, took a real interest in him. They were related, of course, both being descended from Ilus, the grandfather of the present king. Frequently Aeneas shared their games and exercises, and as I watched him holding his own against the older boys I felt as keen a delight as if he had been my own son.

At this time Ilion was peaceful, except for an occasional skirmish on the borders, where wandering tribes sometimes made a swift raid upon the outlying settlements. But Priam followed a vigorous policy: the towns of Ilion were united under his rule, and the raiders found their incursions too costly. After awhile they withdrew to the inland plains, and troubled us no more, though rumors reached us from time to time of bigger movements than usual, and bitter fighting in the empire of the proud and warlike Hittites. The new Troy dominated the plain, keeping watch upon the Hellespont and the Aegean Sea; we mistrusted the fierce Achaians, and had no intention of being caught as we were in Laomedon's time.

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I had plenty of friends in the city, and a pleasant house on the southwestern slope of the hill; from my windows I could see Ida, and spent more time than I should in vain and idle daydreaming. The training of Aeneas, and an occasional visit to my humble friends on the mountain gave me pleasant occupation, and for a time I was content to forget war, somewhat to the disgust of Pielus, who was never happier than with a weapon in his hand — even if only to clean and sharpen. He kept on at me to ride to the wars again; I put him off with half-promises and flat refusals, at which he would mutter darkly and retire to a further polishing of my already immaculate arms.

When Aeneas was thirteen I took him to Thessaly. The king of the Centaurs there, Cheiron by name, was an old acquaintance of mine. He had conceived the idea of taking in young sprigs of nobility and training them in arms, horsemanship, and the politer arts of peace. It was a mark of social distinction to have been with him, and I was lucky to get Aeneas a place before a long list of Achaian princelings. Cheiron was the finest horseman I have ever known, not excepting the Scythians, who are accounted the best in the world. He almost lived in the saddle; and his fame became legendary: I have even heard it credited that he was half-horse and half-man. Which tale, incidentally, amused him hugely.

Aeneas, naturally, was all excitement and eagerness. I stayed for a few days to see him settled. Cheiron gave me some good hunting, and we talked far into the night on war and the handling of men. I looked over some of his pupils; he certainly gave them a thorough training, and they were a promising set of youngsters. Aeneas soon found his place among them; they took to him, although he was the only Ilian

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there; and I left him with an easy mind. But I felt very lonely on the journey back; the boy had been part of my life for so long that I missed him more than I should have thought.

Troy was in a great stir when I arrived back. Anchises, to whom I made a visit to give him news of his son, told me that Priam had ordered a tournament. His sons had issued a general challenge, and the finest white bull from the royal herds was to be the prize. I was glad to hear this, for we'd not had games in Troy for years, and I was anxious to see how our future leaders would bear themselves. I wished that Aeneas could have been there; he would have delighted in it. The contests would include a foot race, boxing, leaping, the discus, archery and spear-throwing. Should the sons of the king beat all who challenged, they would be men indeed.

There were still some days before the games, and I rode out to Ida with one or two small things I had brought from Thessaly for Oenone and Alexander. Cheiron had given me a beautiful bow, very accurate and not too heavy in the pull, which I thought would suit Alexander. He was delighted with it, and spent an hour shooting at a target he rigged up, while Oenone and I sat beneath a tree and watched him.

"I'm glad you brought something to distract his mind," she told me. "He's been very cross since yesterday. The king sent some men to choose a white bull, and they took ours. We call it ours, that is; though of course it is the king's, really. But we'd become rather fond of it." She chuckled. "Sounds rather silly to talk about being fond of a bull, doesn't it? But we were."

When Alexander joined us I explained why the bull was wanted. He nodded, and said, "Well, that's not so bad; we

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were afraid he was to be sacrificed, or something. But so far as we're concerned it's all one; we shan't see him again."

"Why not?" I said, lazily. "You can have him for your own, if you come to the games and win him."

Alexander looked at me, a queer light in his eyes.

"Do you know," he said, slowly, "that's just what I will do!"

* * * * *

At first I thought he was speaking on the impulse of the moment, but when he began to ask for details of the various contests I saw that he was serious. I tried to dissuade him, on the score of his inexperience; but Oenone, who until then had been rather silent and, I thought, disapproving, said that she thought he should contend.

"He's the fastest runner, and the best with the spear and discus, of anybody on the mountain," she said. "And you've just seen what he can do with a bow. I think he'd have a very good chance. Even if he's beaten, it will be fun for him. We can easily get some of the other herdsman to look after things while he's away; especially if they know where he's going. It won't be for long."

I made him agree not to enter the boxing, for they were to use the cestus, and he'd had no experience; after which I said I'd help him as much as I could. He was very eager and excited, and rushed off at once to enlist the aid of some of his friends in his absence. The next morning we started training; by nightfall I found myself considerably astonished at what I'd seen, and gloating over the surprise I'd have for some of my friends when Alexander went into the ring.

Our only disappointment was that Oenone wouldn't come to Troy with us. "The men can look after the herds," she said, "but there are so many things I must do, that they can't. I shall be quite safe, and thinking of you will help pass the time. Besides, I'm so sure you'll win that it wouldn't be very exciting; I'd much rather see you come up the hill with our bull."

Rather to my surprise, Alexander didn't insist; privately Oenone told me that she had a horror of walled places. "I sometimes feel that a great sorrow will come to me because of a city," she said, "and I avoid them. But I know Alex is quite safe with you; it will be good for him to go somewhere without me, among other men."

I tried all I could to persuade her into the journey, but she was very firm. A day or two before the games, therefore, we said good-bye, though, for my part, very reluctantly: I had hoped to see her in my own home, so as to have a memory to treasure. Alexander was too full of excitement for any regrets; after all, he'd be back in three days at most, and it was their first separation since their wedding.

Oenone came as far as Archelaus' cottage, where she meant to pass the night. The old couple were very surprised when they learned what was purposed, and I saw Archelaus glance doubtfully at the boy. But they sped us with blessings and encouragement; and waved to us — all three of them — as long as we were in sight.

It was natural, I suppose, that after a lifetime spent in herdsmen's huts Alexander should have found my house, simple as it was, something of a revelation. He looked about him, and drew a deep breath.

"Why you ever leave this house to endure the discomfort of our poor mountain hut is more than I can imagine," he

said. "I thought I had all I could want on Ida; but I'm beginning to feel discontented."

"A man might go far, and achieve much, yet not be so happy as you," I said. He nodded.

"I suppose so," he said, a shade of indifference in his voice. "You are used to this sort of thing, so I suppose it doesn't mean so much to you; but I — if this were mine, and Oenone here —"

"Yes," I said, in a low voice, for once taken off my guard. "Here — with Oenone —"

He glanced at me sharply, and I rose. "Come and look out from the top windows," I said. Alexander followed me, and stared out at the mountain, blue and graceful in the distance.

"I expect you're fond of this view," he remarked. I didn't like the way he said it, avoiding my eye. But a moment later he turned to me, smiling, his expression frank and open as ever. "Who can blame you, Achates?" he said lightly. "I'd rather look at Ida than live on it. Wouldn't you?"

This time I was more wary. "I'm thinking of riding to the wars again soon," I said. "They tell me there's fighting in the Hittite country; I may even go as far as Egypt."

Alexander stared. "But — with so much to keep you in Ilion?" he said. I shrugged. "I soon tire of distant views, however attractive," I said, indifferently. He nodded slowly, but made no comment.

As we left the house on the morning of the games, we fell in with Anchises, attended by six servants and looking very magnificent in a robe of gold-embroidered blue. I glanced from him to Alexander, and grinned to myself; dressed in clothes from my own wardrobe, the youngster bore himself with a natural dignity and pride quite foreign to his low

degree. Even the astute Anchises accepted him without suspicion.

"This," I said, "is Alexander, a friend of mine." Anchises nodded in a friendly way: Alexander inclined his head and smiled with perfect self-possession.

"He is entering the tournament," I went on. "He will win the foot race, the leaping, and the archery. I am not so sure of the discus or spear-throwing, and he is not boxing."

Anchises turned to stare at me as we passed out of the gates. "You're very sure of your young friend," he said.

"My friend and pupil," I amended. "If I'd had longer, he'd have won everything."

"But you've only been back from Thessaly ten days!" he protested. I nodded. "As you see, not long enough. But I'll back him to win all I've promised."

Anchises began to laugh. This was a language he understood. "What will you wager?" he asked.

"The suit of armor made for me by Iorbas the Tyrian," I replied. "Against a stallion and mare of the white Dardanian breed."

Anchises hesitated; for years he had coveted that armor: but the horses were worth a king's ransom, and were owned exclusively by those of royal blood. Alexander glanced at me, his eyes glinting with amusement, as Anchises deliberated. At last:

"I'll take you, Achates," Anchises said; and there was an unholy smile on his lips. "Now let's hurry; I want a word with Priam before the games begin."

I took Alexander to the space reserved for the challengers and, after a few last words of advice, left him in charge of Pielus while I found my place. Anchises, speaking to the king, saw me, and beckoned. Priam received me graciously.

"I hear you have entered an unknown prodigy," he said. "I am eager to see him. He has some worthy antagonists, I believe."

"The greater honor in meeting them," I replied. The trumpets sounded, and we returned to our places as the competitors for the foot race lined up for the start. I recognized Hector, Deiphobus, Helenus and Polites of the king's sons; of the challengers, Cycnus and Alexander alone I knew.

Alexander got well off the mark, but on my advice lay back until the leaders should have settled the pace. Helenus took the lead, with Cycnus at his heels, Hector a pace or so behind. Deiphobus and Alexander were leading a small knot of young Ilians. The course was a long oval, about five stadia, beginning and ending before the royal enclosure, and was lined by crowds of town and country folk in holiday humor, cheering wildly as the runners passed.

After about two stadia Helenus began to force the pace. Cycnus seemed to be their only serious opposition; obviously he had only one idea: to get in front, and stay there; and when Helenus began to flag, he bounded forward and took the lead. Hector, lying well back, lengthened his stride; and Anchises glanced at me expressively.

"Two stadia to go yet," I observed, calmly. "Now watch!" The runners were passing the bend. Alexander deliberately taking it wide, his increased pace was not noticed until, entering the straight, he passed Polites and Deiphobus, and began to draw up on Hector. Then a great shout greeted the unknown who was challenging the fastest in Troy.

Cycnus began to labour; Hector was past Helenus and slowly making ground when Alexander let himself out. I rose in my place, shouting, as he tore past the astonished Hector with a stade to go and only the failing Cycnus to

beat. The crowd was frantic; Hector's face hardened, and he went for all he was worth, but Alexander, smiling grimly, drew away and finished strongly with ten good paces in hand.

Anchises was stamping with both feet; he shouted something to me that was lost in the uproar. His face was crimson, and he was laughing and nodding toward Priam, who, disappointed as he must have been, was putting a good face on his chagrin.

When the tumult died down a little, people began asking who the unknown runner was; Anchises spread the news that he was a protégé of mine, and we were soon surrounded by an eager crowd. I gave them little satisfaction — but wagered heavily on Alexander's continued success.

Anchises was still laughing to himself; I asked him why. "Such is my confidence in you, my dear Achates," he replied, "that I took the precaution of backing him myself, before the race." He leaned back and regarded me whimsically. "If you win your triple wager with me, your horses will come from Priam's stable, not mine; and I shall have two for myself into the bargain." I started to laugh; he leaned forward and added in a low voice, "I'm not sorry to have the better of my illustrious cousin, for once; he's suspicious of me, and keeps me at arm's length. As if I should envy him his confounded throne!"

Meanwhile, the boxing contests were taking place; the princes, except for young Hipponous, who was soundly beaten by Telephus, the king of Cetaea, came out successfully, and the ground was cleared for the leaping. In the interval, over a cup of Chian wine, Anchises became confidential.

"Let's hope these games have the desired effect on the Stygian ferryman," he remarked.

"Are these funeral games? Who's dead, then?"

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"Oh, nobody, really; nobody we know, I mean. Call it a belated manifestation of conscience on the part of the king."

"I suspect a state secret; tell me about it, I beg!"

Anchises chuckled. "That's only fair, seeing how well I've done out of sharing yours," he said. "But I trust your discretion." In a lower tone he went on, "Have you ever heard that after Hector a second son came, before Ilione?"

"I knew there was some mystery, but never found out what it was."

"Well, that was it. But the night after he was born Hecuba dreamed she'd presented Priam with a flaming torch, that some day should set Troy ablaze. The augurs took a despondent view, and in the end Priam gave the child to an old herdsman, to be exposed on Ida."

I sat very still. Anchises drained his cup.

"Priam is religious — or superstitious, if you like," he went on, "and believes that Charon refuses to ferry a dead prince over the Styx to Elysium until funeral games have been held. He's getting old, and I suppose is nervous of being reproached, when his own time comes, by the homeless ghost of his second son. Thus all this." He took another wine cup from a servant, and poured a little on the ground. "To the second son — wherever he is," he said, with mock piety. As mechanically I repeated the pledge, thinking furiously.

A small person wriggled between us, and I looked down into the laughing face of little Creusa, the king's daughter; a pretty child, and a great favorite of mine. She sat down with an excited sigh.

"Isn't this thrilling?" she said, ecstatically. "I've never seen any games before. I do hope we win. Daddy sacrificed yesterday, and the augur said his son would win the bull."

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I expect it will be Hector, don't you? even though he did lose the foot race. And oh, Achates, I meant to ask — who is the man that beat him? He's a friend of yours, they say."

"His name is Alexander, and I've known him a long time: two or three years."

Little Creusa nodded. "Then I s'pose you've noticed how much he's like my sister Ilione." Anchises and I exchanged a glance, and looked toward the princess. She was standing with big, black-bearded Polymnestor of Thrace, to whom she was soon to be married, and smiling at some remark of his. "They're exactly alike!" the small voice said, triumphantly. "I'm going to see Cassandra about it. Wouldn't it be funny if he were Daddy's long-lost son?"

Considerably startled, "Where did you hear about that?" Anchises demanded. The child smiled seraphically.

"I was behind you when you told Achates," she said, "but you didn't notice me, because I'm not very big, am I?"

"For God's sakes stop her," I whispered urgently to Anchises. Cassandra had the second sight, and if once Creusa spoke her suspicions, there was no knowing what the end might be. But the small figure had slipped through the crowd and was gone. Anchises turned to me.

"Who is he — really, Achates?" he asked.

"He's a herdsman, and lives on Mount Ida," I said, slowly.

Anchises opened his eyes very wide, and whistled. After some thought he began to laugh.

"This is the first time I've ever known a man compete at his own funeral games," he said. "The situation doesn't lack piquancy."

"Then you really believe he is Priam's son?"

"Not a doubt of it; he and Ilione might be twins. Do you

know his father?" I told him of Archelaus, and my earliest doubts, and he nodded. "That's who he is," he said, with satisfaction. "Oh, won't Priam be pleased to find the flaming torch unextinguished!"

But I doubted if the king would find it amusing. It seemed to me that Alexander was in very real danger, but I could not see how to extricate him now without telling him what I suspected — just the one thing Oenone had begged me not to do, for his own sake.

I prayed fervently to all the gods I knew that we might be mistaken; and heartily wished us both well out of it.

* * * * *

The princes jumped first, and set a good length, Hector's being far the best. Of their opponents, Cynus, Polymnestor, Teuthranus of Cetaea and the long-legged Elpenor did well, but not well enough; though the Phrygian almost reached Hector's mark. An unimpressive group of Ilions followed; last of all Alexander appeared. The crowd, anticipating a further thrill, gave him a warm ovation; they seemed to feel the day's events being resolved into a duel between the heir to the throne and this young unknown.

Their expectation was justified: Alexander's leap was declared equal to Hector's; the judges decreed that they should jump again — and together. The people roared their approval as the two young men stood poised, waiting the word. Alex was smiling, but Hector's face was hard and purposeful. A deep hush fell as they ran forward; they rose together into the air, and landed. The judges bent over their marks, an arm was raised — Alexander had won by a hand's breadth.

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I saw him speak to Hector and lay a hand on his shoulder; but the prince, with a furious gesture, shook him off and turned on his heel. The crowd began to murmur, and there was some shouting; Hector ignored everybody, and stalked away. Anchises sat back and laughed softly. "There will be trouble before the day's out," he observed, with satisfaction. "Achates, I look to you for protection."

When it was seen that Hector was not competing for the discus, there were jeers and some loud comments from the people. Alexander's victory — which took me by surprise — was received with a positive tumult of cheers; and to me the situation looked increasingly ugly. I said so to Anchises.

"Nonsense, my dear fellow! Nothing better could possibly have happened. Even if Priam does find out who he is, he won't dare do anything drastic. The people would tear him to pieces!"

I rose. "I hope you're right," I said. "But don't give the thing away — yet. Tell them he came over from Thesaly with me." Anchises nodded, and I made my way to Alexander.

He was chatting with Deiphobus and Polites, and surrounded by an admiring crowd of competitors eager to make his acquaintance. I elbowed my way to him, coming in for some badinage from men I knew for keeping Alexander so dark; and for awhile we exchanged insults pretty freely. When the laughing crowd drew away, "You're doing quite well, Alex," I said. "How do you feel?" He drew a deep breath, and grinned cheerfully.

"Never better," he declared. "I'm glad I came; these men are worth meeting. I like the princes, too. Except Hector."

"Don't let a trifle like that put you out."

"It wasn't a trifle, exactly, was it? In front of everybody —"

"I know. But —"

"We on Ida do at least know how to lose with dignity. But he — a prince —"

"Alex," I broke in, "oblige me by not telling anyone where you come from, will you?"

He regarded me evenly, not without suspicion.

"Any special reason?" he asked.

"No, but I'm backing you pretty heavily — on your behalf as well as mine. You mountain men are accounted highly as archers and spearmen; I shan't get such good odds if you let it out."

His face cleared, and he nodded. "For a moment I thought you might be ashamed of me," he said, flushing a little.

I stared. "Don't be a fool Alex," I said, shortly. "And remember: if anyone asks, you came with me from Thessaly."

He grinned. "I don't even know where Thessaly is," he observed.

"Then just look down your nose at them," I said, impatiently. "You do it rather well!"

He regarded me curiously. "What troubles you, Achates?" he asked. "Something's put you out!"

"I don't like the way the crowd's behaving," I said. "I shall be glad when the day's over."

His face darkened. "It's Hector's own fault," he said. "He made things worse by not going for the discus."

"I know; but don't take him too seriously. He's choleric, but a good fellow. It would have been his day, except for you; and he's naturally disappointed."

"He'll be more so before we've done."

"Don't underrate him. There are still the spear-throwing and archery to come; he's a fine bowman."

"I hope so; because there's a trick I want to show him that we practice on Ida when the days are overlong."

"Well, don't provoke him unnecessarily. He's annoyed with you, and the crowd; and there's mischief in the air."

Alexander's eyes were dancing. "They won't hurt me!" he said.

I shrugged. "Good luck," I said. "And change your bow-string if it frays; Pielus has some spares."

As I returned to my seat, Anchises cocked an inquiring eyebrow at me.

"He's out for blood," I said, with a sigh. "Hector has properly upset him."

Anchises settled himself with a malicious chuckle. "That family hates well," he remarked. "I'm looking forward to some amusement." I cursed him dispassionately; he laughed, and we turned to watch the spear-throwing.

Rather to my surprise — and, paradoxically, disappointment — Alexander contented himself by outthrowing all his rivals without any dramatic display. Hector had himself well in hand, and although he didn't speak to Alex, bore his defeat philosophically. The people cheered the victory, but Hector's appearance and bearing had made a good impression; sympathy seemed to veer his way.

This succession of wins was almost monotonous: the unreasoning crowd felt that Alexander owed them a thrill. His last victory had made him champion of the day; the archery, the last event, looked like being anti-climactic, unless he produced something unexpected.

They were not to be disappointed.

A pine-shaft was set up, and successively moved to greater

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distances as contestants were gradually eliminated, until only Polymnestor of Thrace, Hector and Alexander were left. While the target was being moved again I left my place and, skirting the field, stood in the shadow of an altar erected to Zeus, at which the proper rites had been performed the previous day. Here I was a little behind the three men, and near enough at hand if trouble started.

Polymnestor found the mark with his first two shafts; the third shaved it, and flew on. Alexander and Hector scored three hits; Polymnestor laughed ruefully, spoke a word, and withdrew. The judges conferred; Alexander, who had been regarding Hector thoughtfully, approached them.

"The prince is worthy of nobler sport than this," he said. "May I presume to suggest a mark that will test even his skill?"

The judges hesitated, and looked to Hector. He shrugged indifferently. Alexander smiled, and inclined his head.

"I will loose a shaft upwards," he said. "Do you, Lord Hector, hit it in flight — if you can!"

Hector stared at him. "You know it's impossible!" he said, curtly. "Is this your idea of humor?"

"I have seen it done," said Alexander in a quiet tone. "But if you'd rather not try —"

"Oh, I'll try!" Hector said, scornfully. "On condition that you also make the attempt."

"Naturally!" Alexander replied; and selected two shafts with care. Smiling a little, he loosed one upward, and watched as Hector, arrow on string, waited, tense and determined. Not until the shaft was falling did he let loose, almost horizontally; in utter silence the crowd watched its flight. It seemed to brush the falling arrow, and a scrap of feather fluttered idly for a moment where their paths had

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crossed. Then a great sustained cheer arose, and Alexander muttered a complimentary exclamation.

Hector ignored him. Elated by a success he had hardly dared to hope for, he curled a disdainful lip, and drew a second shaft. Alexander swiftly fitted a new string, and nodded. Hector's shaft sang into the sky; Alexander raised his bow—the bow I had brought from Cheiron, and his arrow followed Hector's upward. Directed slightly lower, it overtook Hector's on the turn; fair and true it struck, and together the shafts hurtled to the ground.

For a moment there was a silence of utter astonishment; then pandemonium broke loose. I would not have believed such a feat possible; and had the day been other than quite windless, I still doubt that he would have done it.

I looked at Hector: his face was scarlet with rage. Then, quite unnecessarily, Alexander laughed.

Muttering a furious exclamation Hector drew a dagger and leaped. Alexander, watching him, jumped away, and, turning, ran lightly toward me. He was laughing softly as he passed; I knew then that he had planned this, and was making for the sanctuary of Zeus' altar. I cursed him roundly for provoking Hector into this display of passion; its effect on the crowd was disastrous. There were angry shouts, that swelled in volume as the people swarmed into the arena. If Alexander had hoped to shame and humiliate Hector, the anger of the crowd proved the measure of his success. I feared for Hector's life.

But there was an unexpected diversion. As Alexander reached the altar a tall young girl moved out of its shadow and confronted Hector. At sight of those great dreaming eyes and pale face he stopped short, his hand falling to his side. The guards, with sword and spear, held back the

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shouting crowds, and Alexander looked on in some bewilderment.

"Take his hand in yours, Hector," said Cassandra, "for he is your own brother."

At her words there was a sudden hush. Then an excited murmuring broke out in the press nearest the three, which swelled to a roar as Priam appeared. Cassandra, pale and unsmiling, went to Alexander, and took his hand.

"Kneel," she said, "and receive your father's blessing. Father, look on your son, restored from the dead —"

Priam looked at her in utter bewilderment. Even as he gazed the light died from her eyes; she swayed, and like a drooping lily sank slowly to the ground.

Chapter Three

FOR SEVERAL DAYS THERE WERE REJOICINGS IN TROY; processions, religious and secular; banquets at the palace; a great fair in the market place; and so forth. The whole story was now public; Anchises was generally credited with having engineered the whole affair — with a little assistance from me; and the Trojans were deeply grateful to him for the dramatic way in which the revelation had been made.

Archelaus and Rhodope were sent for and questioned. Rather apprehensively they admitted that Alexander was indeed the child doomed by Priam. Greatly to their surprise they were held in high honor, nor were the material blessings lacking. They returned to Ida in great exaltation, but faintly bewildered.

Archelaus remarked to me before he left, "I can't imagine why it never occurred to me to produce him before. I'd no idea they loved him so much!"

But of all the people concerned in the restoration the most surprised and pleased was, I think, the augur who had prophesied that the day would be won by the king's son. Undoubtedly he had meant Hector, and it was a fairly safe bet; but as things had turned out he received a veneration little less than that accorded to the Delphic oracle. I refuse to believe he was divinely inspired. I knew him too well.

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I am not so sure about Cassandra. Whether she went entirely on Creusa's evidence — after seeing Alexander for herself, or whether she really was in a prophetic trance, I do not know. If not, she acted remarkably well.

For three or four days I had no speech with Alexander alone. Priam and Hecuba wouldn't let him out of their sight. I don't know if they'd forgotten, or decided to ignore the dream that had originated his disappearance; or whether Anchises was right in his prophecy that they wouldn't dare to harm him after his popular success in the games. As far as I could make out Hector still treated him with distant coldness; but Polites and Hipponous — charming but graceless youths — had taken him to their hearts. The more so as the games had resulted in a victory for the royal family, when up to the last moment defeat had seemed certain.

I suppose I was rather unreasonable in feeling slightly hurt that Alexander — or Paris, as he was now called, the name being more suitable to his princely rank — didn't make an earlier opportunity of seeing me. However, I made allowances, and waited; at last he sent for me, and received me alone. He was lodged in the palace until a suitable establishment could be arranged for him, and was splendidly dressed, his hair being curled in the height of fashion. But the smile with which he met me was unchanged.

"Sit down, Achates, and let's talk," he said. "You are the only solid rock in my sea of strange experiences."

"You must be a good swimmer, then," I commented dryly. He flashed a surprised glance at me, and reddened slightly. "Honestly, this is the first chance I've had," he protested.

"Well, the games had a surprising outcome," I said, "and now that you're a prince I suppose your time will be rather

fully occupied. What happened to the bull, by the way?"

He looked startled. "To tell you the truth, I haven't the least idea," he said. "I suppose somebody is looking after it for me."

"Oenone's hopes of seeing you bring it up the hill were disappointed, then. When do you expect her?"

"That's one of the things I want to talk about," he said. "Of course, she knows what's happened — I sent a message by Archelaus; but I want you to go, if you will, and explain the position frankly. I mean, she has such decided views on living in a city; and you can see for yourself that I can't possibly go back there. They'd never let me."

"They managed very well without you for twenty-odd years."

He flushed. "What I mean is that I can't go back to a herdsman's life; that's obviously impossible. And to live in the country as a prince is neither one thing nor the other."

"Archises does so very successfully."

Paris shot an amused glance at me. "Is this the Achates who used to tell me what fun it was to live in Troy?" he said.

I laughed; but the shot went home.

"It suits me; I'd have nothing against it for you, if Oenone hadn't such strong objection."

"Perhaps she won't, in the circumstances . . . That's what I'd like you to find out."

"Very well. I'll try and persuade her. If she decides to come, I'll send word by Pielus. I suppose Priam will send an escort?"

Paris looked confused, and hesitated. "As a matter of fact," he said slowly, "I — haven't told them about her."

"Why not?"

"Well, it's not easy to explain. The fact is, that they

started talking about foreign alliances before I had a chance; they took it for granted that I wasn't married. Archelaus did mention Oenone in their hearing, but they assumed it to be one of those affairs that undeniably exist, but are not spoken of."

I stared. "And you didn't enlighten them?"

"I tell you they didn't let me . . . And then, if by any chance she refuses to come to me — and she's quite capable of doing so, you don't know how obstinate she can be — well, I don't see why we should both remain single all our lives, never seeing each other —"

He paused, regarding me rather defiantly. I was never more surprised in my life.

"You see," he hurried on, "these political alliances are often cemented by a marriage — of convenience, if you like; I'll never love anyone but Oenone, of course. But high rank sometimes entails sacrifice of personal feelings —"

"I hope you are not presuming to give me a lecture on statecraft," I put in, coldly.

His eyes gleamed angrily. "You are a master diplomat," he replied. "You kept the secret of my parentage remarkably well — even from me! I often wondered why a noble like you cultivated me; I am not surprised that you tried to stop me competing in the games."

I fought for breath. "With what possible motive?" I asked.

"As you have just pointed out, in such matters I am a mere child," he said. "I feel sure you had some good reason. Perhaps not unconnected with my — with Oenone. Well, now is your chance; go to her; tell her everything; tell her, that if it comes to a plain choice between her and — all this, that — Well, in short, make the most of your opportunity."

I do not know how I kept my hand from my sword. A red mist swam before my eyes, and I rose unsteadily. Paris saw my expression, and backed hastily away.

"Perhaps I've been a bit blunt," he said (an understatement unparalleled in my experience). "I don't mean I think there's anything between you and her; forget all that. But I shall not leave Troy. If she likes to come here, I'll present her — as my wife, Achates — to my parents. The foreign alliance means little to me; I owe them nothing, after all. They do owe me twenty years of hardship and toil. . . . All the same, it would be strange, wouldn't it, if this princess they have in mind for me should be the woman Aphrodite promised — the fairest woman in the world — "

So that was it. He hadn't forgotten his dream. And he was willing to forego a perfect actuality for that chimera. Oenone had judged shrewdly when she told me not to try to change his humble condition.

"Alexander," I said, "you — "

He put out a hand. "I'm now known as Paris," he said, with dignity.

"I'll call you pretty names when your conduct becomes your rank," I retorted. "What you are suggesting now is unworthy of even a herdsman. Or a slave. The plain fact is that your sudden elevation has gone to your head. You can't see Oenone fitting in with your future — especially that part of it connected with an idle dream — and you are going to throw her off. Presumably into my arms. Some day you will regret it. At the moment you are out of your senses. Until you find them again I've no use for you."

"Your strictures are as tedious as — as Oenone's devotion; you should make a perfect, but somewhat depressing match," he said; and I sprang at him.

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"Alex," I said, "I've taken from you what no other man would have said to me, and lived. But when you speak like that of Oenone, you go too far. You will answer for those words with your sword."

"Oh, no, I shan't," he said, laughing. "I've far too much sense!"

"Then I'll brand you coward, traitor, and general swine through all Ilion."

"Do, and see what reception you get. They'll roar with laughter. Do you realize I'm the most popular man in the kingdom?"

"The people's entire lack of discernment is proverbial," I said.

He flushed angrily, and moved to the door.

"Regarding the mission with which I have charged you," he said, formally, "it is no longer a request, it's a command!"

I smiled. "Being a Dardanian I am not liege to Troy," I said. "Nevertheless, I'll comply with your — request: for Oenone's sake."

He nodded insolently. "Somehow I thought you would," he said; and was gone.

* * * * *

I think even Pielus was surprised at the range and depth of my vocabulary. He listened in admiring silence as I swore softly to myself during the process of dressing for that night's banquet at the palace — the last and most magnificent being held in the new prince's honor.

It was a pleasant surprise to find an old friend of my fighting days arrived unexpectedly — Idomeneus, the son of Deucalion of Crete. He was a cheerful soul, and we spent

a joyous hour recalling old times, mutual friends, and scandalous gossip. He glanced from time to time at the noisy group of half-drunken youngsters about Paris, and looked at me expressively. I shrugged.

"He's a nice boy, but they're spoiling him," I said. "He hasn't a good head for popularity." Idomeneus laughed.

"Or for this Chian," he remarked. "He'll be under the table before the evening's half over, at the pace he's setting."

"A good place for him, for the next year or so," I said, dispassionately.

"Your friend Anchises is looking far from well, too," Idomeneus observed, with truth. Anchises had been drinking heavily for over a week, celebrating not only the restoration but his own sudden consequent favor in the royal circle. He looked very flushed and his eyes glittered with a queer, unhealthy light.

"He's had years of experience," I said. "Paris has not." Idomeneus regarded him thoughtfully. "He looks a sick man to me," he said. "Can't you suggest to him the shining virtues of temperance?"

"He'd merely curse me, and drink twice as heavily, just to show," I assured him. Priam addressed some remark to Idomeneus; and for the moment we forgot Anchises. The king raised his hand. When there was quiet:

"I have prevailed upon our honored guest and friend, known to many of you: Prince Idomeneus of Crete," here there was much cheering, "to tell us something of his travels, and the reasons that brought him to our shores at such a happy moment."

Idomeneus raised his long figure to the comparatively vertical, and grinned rather diffidently. "Well, I don't know that I've been anywhere or done anything much, since I left

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Crete, worth making a speech about," he said, slowly, "but I've met some interesting people you might care to hear about. Some of them are pretty well known. I expect the names of Odysseus of Ithaca, Agamemnon and Menelaus the grandsons of Atreus of Mycenae, Ajax of Locris, and Diomedes of Argos are familiar. We were all foregathered at Sparta, with a lot of others who were attracted to the same bright star — Helen, the daughter of Tyndareus. There wasn't a noble house in all Achaia unrepresented; and Tyndareus was far from happy. I suppose we must have struck him as a hot-headed collection, and he foresaw trouble when he gave the delectable Helen to the chosen suitor."

He paused. "Of course we all adored Helen," he went on, "but there was more in it than that. As time went on, and no decision was reached, we began to regard the ultimate choice as a matter affecting our family honor. You can see, then, that Tyndareus had plenty to worry about. The solution, of course, was simple and obvious; but it took a cooler head than most of us possessed to see it. In the end Odysseus went to Tyndareus and offered to settle things to everybody's satisfaction, guaranteeing that there'd be no fighting. He asked as his reward the hand of Penelope, daughter of Icarius, Tyndareus' brother. This was agreed. He then bound us all by a terrific oath, firstly, to abide without question by the decision of Helen herself; secondly, to confederate in defense of her and the man she chose, then and thereafter."

There was a murmur of interest as he paused to take a sip of wine, and Priam nodded. After a moment Idomeneus went on:

"She chose Menelaus of Sparta. I should have mentioned that she'd never given the least hint of her inclination, or

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we might not have been so ready to take the twofold oath. As it was, we all secretly hoped. But when her decision was made known, we consoled ourselves as best we could, and wished them joy. I didn't feel like going straight home, and, having heard a good deal about your new city, I decided to come and see for myself," here he hesitated, and grinned slyly, "whether it's really as impregnable as you think."

There was a roar of laughter, amid which he said, "You never know. And you're quite welcome to visit Crete, whenever you like, with the same motive. My lord Paris, on behalf of my father the king, I invite you cordially to spend a summer with us. We shall regard it as an honor to provide what entertainment our island can furnish to the royal son of Troy."

The invitation was well received. Crete was a powerful kingdom and, being a great sea-power, a very useful friend to Ilion, whose wealth depended so much on sea-borne trade. Paris rose, and with Priam's nodded consent, accepted gracefully.

Seeing faces still turned toward him expectantly, Idomeneus continued:

"I'm not going to indulge in any compliments that aren't sincere. I am bound to say that Troy is the finest citadel and the most charming city I have seen — outside Crete. Your craftsmen are unexcelled; your women — I should have mentioned them sooner — peerless." He paused. "I hope it will not be taken as casting the least aspersion on them if I say peerless, with one exception: Helen of Sparta."

There were some good-humored comments, but his words were spoken with such an engaging air that they gave no offense.

Idomeneus went on:

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"It's quite beyond my powers to describe her beauty; I wish I could have had the happiness of bringing her as my wife, so that you could have judged of her incomparable beauty for yourselves. Though," he added, smiling, "there would have been sad hearts in Ilion at my leaving." As Idomeneus sat down —

"Those regrets will be felt by us all as it is, Idomeneus," Hector said, and an approving chorus echoed the sentiment.

Idomeneus bowed, smiled, and buried his flushing face in a wine cup.

Then Anchises struggled to his feet. He was shaking a little, and his face was violently red. Priam regarded him with disfavor, but he seemed determined to speak.

"Our honored friend has been most interesting on the subject of Helen of Sparta," he began, thickly. "I, too, should have been glad to see her, and to compare her with one I have known. Her beauty has been described as incomparable. Among earthly women that may be so. But I — I have seen Aphrodite herself. You all know my son, Aeneas. I solemnly declare to you that he — that he — " Anchises gasped, choked, and fell forward heavily among the wine cups.

Priam rose angrily. "Take him away, and let him be attended to," he said. He made a dignified apology to Idomeneus. And amid an embarrassed hush Anchises was lifted and borne from the hall.

Idomeneus turned to me, and grinned. "See what comes of speaking indiscreetly of goddesses," he remarked. "And," he added thoughtfully, "Helen is nearly as well served."

* * * * *

The next morning I rode out to Ida, having first inquired

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at Anchises' house. The attack had been more serious than we imagined; he was being attended by the best physicians in Troy, but they were very doubtful about him. He was partially paralyzed, though fortunately his mind was unimpaired. They told me, too, that Priam had ordered his banishment to his country home as soon as he could travel. So his return to favor was short-lived.

I told Pielus something of the reason for our journey as we crossed the plain.

He made no comment, except to say, "She's far too good for him. Thought so the first time I saw them. If she's wise she'll stay where she is."

Oenone was making cheese when I reached the cottage. She smiled. "I've been expecting you, Achates," she said, "but it would just happen that today . . . I suppose you've come from Alex?"

"I have. And you can't go on making cheese while a state message is being delivered by an accredited ambassador."

"Indeed I can! Tell me, what did he say?"

"Put briefly, he begs you to share his state, as you adorned his humility."

She choked back a laugh. "Very prettily put, Achates. But that's not at all what he said!"

I regarded her with amused surprise. "Suppose you deliver the message yourself, then?" I suggested.

Oenone straightened herself, and drew back her long hair from a white forehead. The smile had left her lips.

"Wasn't it more like this? 'Tell her that if she likes to come and live in Troy, I'll acknowledge her. If not — and she can be very obstinate, you know her ideas about living in cities — then she must choose between Ida and me.

Because I shan't leave Troy — even for her.' Wasn't that it, Achates?"

"How did you know?"

"I didn't. But — I know Alex rather well."

"Then you've probably decided on your answer?"

"Yes. The one he expects — and hopes for."

"You will come?"

Oenone regarded me gravely, and shook her head. "He doesn't want me — now, Achates," she said. "A time will come, I know it as surely as that I love him, when he will return to me — here, on Ida. I am his first love; his only true love, and he will come back. He will find me waiting, and unchanged."

"You seem very sure."

"You don't deny it."

"I know that he means to present you to the king and queen as his wife. I know that they will love you. Everybody will. I know that there is not a lady in Ilion so worthy of high distinction; you would give luster even to the throne."

"Even if that were all true — and you talk great nonsense sometimes, Achates, though I love you for it — it's all beside the point. If I went to him now, I should weary him. I'm a country girl, unused to courts. The fine ladies of Troy would laugh at my brown neck and arms, my simple ways and ideas; they'd pity him for being tied to a relic of his humble past. The king would find me a constant reproach and reminder of his — crime. Whereas if I stay here, unacknowledged, obscure and unknown, perhaps sometimes he will think of me with affection. It will take him a year or two to run through the glamor of his new position. Well, I can wait. He will probably have affairs with other women; but he is mine at heart, and will come back to me."

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I gazed at her with respect. "You are either a paragon of selflessness, Oenone, or the cleverest woman I have ever met. Alex called me a master of diplomacy, but I sit at your feet."

She smiled. "There's a third alternative," she pointed out. "I may be utterly selfish. I value his happiness, and this course will ensure it. But more than anything I want him. And, believe me, this is the only way."

I sighed. "It seems to me that you're backing your judgment rather heavily," I told her.

She laughed. "They tell me you did so, at the games," she replied. "And won. And I know him better even than you."

"You do believe, by the way, that I had nothing to do with the secret being revealed? That when I began to suspect it, I did all I could to suppress it?"

"Of course, Achates. I should not have trusted him to you else."

"You thought it possible, then, that something might happen?"

"I felt sure it would."

"You are not resentful, that I failed?"

"No."

I regarded her curiously. "Yet you asked me not to make any effort to discover his parentage!"

"I know. But these things are beyond our control. It was his destiny to become a prince —"

"But surely you didn't know he was —"

Oenone smiled. "Faithful heart," she said, "Rhodope told me the day we were wed. I've known it all the time!"

Chapter Four

FOR SOME TIME IT WAS DOUBTFUL IF ANCHISES WOULD live. Gradually, however, he climbed the hill, and was moved to his country home near Dardanos. I went with him, caring little that by so doing I displeased Priam, who cherished a quite unjustified suspicion that Anchises conspired against him, and regarded with a jealous eye any fighting man of note who had much to do with him.

Slowly Anchises recovered the use of his arms, though he never walked again. Happily his mind remained clear. An entertaining companion before, he seemed by the infirmity of his body to be doubled in wit. Before long his house became a rendezvous for the intellectuals of Troy. He became a generous patron of the arts; altogether I think he was happier than he'd ever been.

Oenone would not leave the cottage — where, in fact, she was perfectly safe. She was known and loved by the herdsmen and their wives, and received a deal of sympathy from them.

But no whisper of her secret ever reached Troy. It was only fair that I should visit her seldom; but I presented her to Anchises, and they became friendly at once, he finding her quickness and penetration worthy of even his mettle. I did not tell him who she was — I couldn't trust his discretion that far — and I think he took her for an interest of mine.

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As she was, though not in the way he supposed.

Oenone made a good impression, too, on the physician, a grave, elderly priest of great learning. I was astonished once at hearing them deep in an argument on herbs and simples as medicines, of which it appeared she had a surprisingly wide knowledge. She told me afterward that her father had been a priest in Cebren, and had made of herbs a life study.

She seemed quite happy, quite content. She held to an unwavering faith in Alex — she never called him by his new name — and waited patiently, in complete confidence, for his return. We had news of him from time to time; how, as second son, he had taken his place in the Council, where his shrewdness and judgment had won him real respect; how he was the leader of fashion and gaiety in the city — tales not always creditable, these — ; and how at last he had sailed, with six ships and a magnificent retinue, for Kyprian Salamis, Sidon and Tyre, before going on to Crete. It was thought that he would make a round trip, by way of the Achaian mainland, visiting Polymnestor and Ilione, now married, in Thrace, and making the return crossing from Thessaly. He was expected to be away two years.

We heard, too, of Hector's marriage to Andromache, daughter of Eetion of Cilicia. And that Creusa, though not of marriageable age, was growing into a lovely and lovable maid.

As Anchises' health improved and the number of his visitors increased, it became clear that he no longer stood in much need of me. And frankly, I found his pet musicians and painters a tiresome, egotistical lot. For all the hope I had of winning Oenone's love she might have been my sister — or my daughter.

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I therefore resolved to go adventuring again for a year or two, since there was so little to keep me busy in Ilion. Pielus wanted me to join the fighting in the land of the Hittites, but when I asked on which side, he didn't know. The proud, cruel Hittites were little to my liking; but the wild hordes who had swept down on them from the north were less so. Having heard good reports about the new king of Egypt — a fighting Rameses — and the danger he faced from Libya, I decided to offer my services to him.

When my intention became known I had great difficulty in limiting my following to the hundred upon which I'd settled. Pielus and I selected them with care from the numbers who applied. In the end we chose upwards of sixty who had sailed with me before; the rest being younger men eager to share the exploits about which their elders had so often bragged. The equipment and training of this small force occupied two or three months.

Meanwhile I had bought a ship to carry us overseas. She was sound and well-found, though not very fast, being a merchantman without oars or beak. She carried high, bluff bows, and had washboards at the waist; rode well, and was reasonably roomy and comfortable. Oddly enough, she was named *The Nymph of Ida*, a fact that predisposed me in her favor, apart from her other desirable qualities.

For shipmaster I took a ruffianly looking Cilician named Abastes who had traded for my father. He knew the seaways intimately, having sailed with the Phoenicians for many years. He brought with him a lean, saturnine brother in iniquity, one Linius, who seldom spoke and never smiled, though he had a dry humor quite his own. Pielus approved them, though grudgingly; he was naturally suspicious of the sea and all who had to do with it.

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Two young Dardanians, eager for experience and honor, came with me as squires. I knew and respected their fathers as great warriors in their day. The boys were called Cloanthus and Sergestus, and I renewed my own youth as I saw the enthusiasm with which they entered into every detail of the expedition.

Anchises made a special journey to Antandros to see us sail, and to my great joy Oenone came with him. She remarked on the ship's name, and hoped it would be an augury of good fortune.

"My thoughts and prayers will be with you, Achates, wherever you go," she told me. "I — we shall miss you; don't stay too long away."

"Say the word, and I shan't even go," I said, lightly. "I'm only going because you don't love me!"

She laughed. "I've a mind to take you at your word!" she replied. "But those poor men would be so disappointed! Achates, I'd no idea you had such a terrific reputation, I'm quite nervous of you!"

"I'm quite mild by nature. I just happen to arrive in places as the bickering begins."

"Is there no bickering on the borders of Ilion?"

"In Ilion," I said, slowly, "there's a face that's far too beautiful for my peace; and it can never be mine. But it will be my star and inspiration, my dear — whatever may come. It's no use your trying to guess whose it is," I added, "because nobody in all the world knows that."

Oenone smiled, but my heart leaped when I saw that there were tears in her lovely eyes.

"Don't be too sure of that, Achates," she said, softly. "I — I wish —"

I shall never know what she was going to say, for Pielus

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broke in upon us, and I had no further chance to speak to her alone. But I've often wondered, since, whether many things might have been different, had I met her before she knew Alexander.

* * * * *

We broke our journey at Crete, staying there for over a week while Abastes took in stores and water. The men found the port of Cnossos much to their liking. I left Pielus to see that they didn't get into too much trouble, and with the two boys went on to the city, some twenty-five stadia inland.

Idomeneus, now king, received us with gratifying joy. He showed us the famous labyrinth, and repeated the somewhat unedifying story of Pasiphae, Daedalus, the bull, and the consequent Minotaur. He proved himself a worthy king of a sea-going people, he told the preposterous tale with an engaging sincerity that completely deceived Cloanthus and Sergestus, who felt very dashing and grownup to be admitted to such topics. He afterwards told me that there wasn't a word of truth in it. Actually, old Minos had been fond of bullfighting; the seven Athenian youths and maidens said to have been devoured by the monster yearly were specially trained athletes, and the celebrated Theseos a bullfighter of considerable experience. But the story, I found, had a wide credence in Achaia and elsewhere. Neither Idomeneus nor I ever bothered to contradict it.

Before we left he warned me to keep a good lookout as we crossed the wide sea that lay between Crete and the mouth of the Nile. The sea-rovers, he said, were on the move, and in greater numbers than usual. His spies had reported a

confederation between them and the Philistines, and it was thought that they had an understanding with the Libyans who were massing on the western borders of Egypt. Idomeneus thought it likely that, using the sea-rovers as liaison, the Philistines would time their attack from the east to coincide with a descent from the west by the Libyans.

I asked him if I might pass this invaluable information on when I came to Egypt.

He thought for a moment. "Yes," he said. "I've no quarrel with Rameses; and the culture of Egypt is nearly as old as ours. On the other hand, the sea-rovers are a general pest; I lose hundreds of merchantmen every year, in spite of my warships. I'd be glad to see them driven from the seas. If I weren't king, I'd sail with you, Achates. There's going to be some good fighting where you're going. But no heroics. If you run across the sea-raiders, stow sail and keep out of sight. They hunt in droves, and you wouldn't stand a chance."

Idomeneus wasn't the man to counsel caution without very good reason. I determined to be very wary, and to take his advice.

I divided the men into six watches, the first of which took up stations around the bulwarks, the others resting or looking to their weapons. We passed a few merchantmen bound for Crete. Toward evening there was an alarm when twenty ships were seen, far to the northward, sailing in formation. Linius pronounced them to be Cretan warships, and we watched their russet sails dip slowly beneath the horizon.

A sudden shout from the bows. We turned, and saw to the southward a small fleet of long, lean galleys, bearing east with sail and oar.

Abastes spat disgustedly. "Sea-rovers," he said. "I know

their ships, I've fought them under Malchus of Sidon. Making for Syria, from Cyrenaica, I should say. Twenty-odd. What are your orders, Lord Achates?"

We had been sighted. The main force held on its way, but two of the dark, sinister vessels bore off in our direction.

Abastes laughed. "They take us for some fat merchant-man," he said.

I nodded. "We'll take advantage of their mistake," I replied. "Bear as much westward as the wind will allow, until we're out of sight of the others. Pielus, make the men lie down along the thwarts. They're to stay hidden until I give the word."

A brisk wind filled our sails, but the oars of the galleys creamed the sea. Gradually they gained upon us, side by side, about a bowshot apart, evidently meaning to take us at both sides simultaneously.

When we could make out the fierce, dark faces in their bows:

"Go about, Abastes!" I said.

It was less a fight than a massacre. The galleys raced alongside, boarding-ladders were raised, and the rovers, howling and waving their long-handled axes, were about to rush our decks when up rose a long, grim line of archers. The great war-bows thrummed a deep, musical note; a hail of death hissed down into the crowded galleys; and the fight was as good as over.

Cloanthus and Sergestus stood by me, fully armed, eagerly waiting. I nodded and smiled. "They're yours!" I said.

The boys scrambled down to the waist, each leading a party of men into the galleys grappled on both thwarts. They met small resistance from the few remaining rovers.

In a short time they hailed me, flushed and triumphant, from their prizes.

Pielus uttered a deep, growling laugh. "They've been blooded," he said. "See them strutting like turkey-cocks!"

I left them to command the galleys, warning them to watch our stern light, as we meant to sail through the night. Abastes had learned the art, introduced not many years before by the Phoenicians, of steering by the stars. We thus saved much time on our journey.

So, with an augmented fleet, and feeling not a little pleased with ourselves, we came to Egypt, and the mouth of the Nile.

* * * * *

We were received with some suspicion by the Governor of the Western Arm, Thonis by name; the two galleys made a bad impression. Fortunately, he was entertaining an officer of high rank in Pharaoh's fleet, who knew the Ilian lines of our ship, and the manner of our dress and speech. I explained things to him, and the governor gave us a permit to sail up the Nile to Memphis, where Rameses was assembling his army, though his capital was at Thebes.

The naval officer who had spoken for us offered to come with me on the *Nymph*, and arrange for our presentation to Pharaoh. His name was Meri-mentu, and I found him a pleasant companion on that long, slow, upstream journey. He had travelled widely, and possessed all the culture and refinement of the well-born Egyptian.

He was greatly interested in our meeting with the sea-rovers, and questioned me about their position, course, and numbers. I told him, too, what Idomeneus had said.

"That's useful information," he said. "Pharaoh will be pleased."

We reached Memphis — the Egyptians call it Men-nefer, the White Wall — shortly before nightfall on the second day. I shall never forget the beauty of its lofty temples and palaces as the sun rushed down the west. Meri-mentu took me next day to the great temple, where I was lost in wonder at the grandness of conception that had called these vast pillared halls into being; but he told me that this was nothing to the temple at Karnak, which eclipsed in grandeur all others in the land.

When our business was known we were commanded to wait upon Rameses after the next morning's public audience. While we waited Meri-mentu took me into the great hall of the palace where Pharaoh sat enthroned, listening with calm detachment to complaints and petitions. I looked with interest on this man, little older than myself, worshipped as a god while still living; believing no less than the people in his own divinity; and ruling millions with absolute despotism. His face was proud and vital. I suspected that his fighting blood wearied unutterably of the formality of state. He reminded me of a caged hawk, remembering crags that overlook the world.

After the audience Pharaoh received us in a small room, richly furnished. Meri-mentu told him of my wish to fight for him, and of our news concerning the sea-rovers. Pharaoh replied, and Meri-mentu turned to me.

"Pharaoh is pleased to give you greeting," he said. I made an obeisance. I do not bow readily to any man, but my respect for Rameses was sincere. He smiled, and held out a brown, strong hand for me to touch. Meri-mentu gave his words:

"Your offer of service is accepted. For your news of the sea-rovers and their alliance with my enemies I offer thanks.

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There will be war very soon; and there is always a place at my side for a brave fighting man. I will see you again after the Council. Meanwhile, use Pharaoh's palace as your own."

We bowed, and took our leave.

* * * * *

Egypt had been passing through troublous times. Some years before a Syrian opportunist, one Arsu, had forced the warring chiefs of the various nomes (as they call their states) into some degree of unity; which he had then most tyrannously exploited. He had been expelled by Setnekht, father of the present king, whose reign, though short, had been beneficent and vigorous. He had restored the priesthood and left to his son, the third Rameses, a prosperous and united kingdom.

In the meantime, however, the Libyans had established themselves in the northwest, where they occupied several towns and continually threatened the fertile lands of the Delta. Successive years of drought and famine, which had scarcely affected Egypt, had rendered them desperate, and they were now massing for an attack in force. The danger was great; immeasurably more so by reason of their alliance with the Philistines, who had a long score to settle with Egypt, and saw their opportunity. These people had enlisted the aid of the sea-rovers; and Rameses was faced with a pretty problem.

The news I had brought confirmed what he already knew; he was well served. For some weeks troops had been assembling from the nomes, and fine fighting men they were, too. He had light and heavy infantry — mercenaries, these; the

native Egyptians were mostly light columns of spearmen and cavalry. But the cream and pride of his army were the chariots, and they were terrific. Fast, light, and dashing; they were the finest fighting force I've ever seen.

Pharaoh resolved to settle the Libyans before they marched. Then, supported by the fleet, to cross the Delta and deal with the Philistines. He hoped to trap the sea-rovers where they were assembling, near Gaza. The fleet was already at sea.

Having seen something of war I enjoyed talking to the captains to whom Meri-mentu made me known before he rejoined his ship. Up in the north the custom was to plunge joyfully into battle, killing or capturing whoever you could, every man for himself. Nestor of Pylos had recently advocated the considered ordering of a battle — a policy which had my ardent support — but I learned that in Egypt they'd been doing it for years. I therefore looked forward with much pleasure to the opening campaign.

It was a grand sight, when at last the army moved, with Pharaoh in a chariot at its head, to see the columns of well-armed, disciplined troops marching behind the emblems of their nomes. My little force was attached to the king's guard. I, with Pielus, Sergestus and Clanthus, rode with the cavalry. Rameses forced the pace. Detachments of light horse scoured the country ahead to prevent word reaching the Libyans that we were on the move.

By nightfall on the fourth day we were reported within striking distance. Tents were pitched on the eastern slopes of a long range of hills, and scouts sent out to examine the enemy's positions.

It had been well-chosen. A crescent valley ran northward to the sea. The Libyans, on the western side, overlooked it, and seemed unassailable without heavy loss. Some prisoners

were brought in, and confirmed that a large army faced us. Though they were quite undisciplined, we knew them to be brave men and stout fighters. Rameses held a council to plan his attack.

With Pielus I made an investigation of my own. I wondered if something might be attempted on their flank. At the southern end of the valley we found a deep cleft, large enough to conceal a considerable body of troops, it opened to the west, and we explored it hopefully. Evidently the Libyans were quite unaware of Pharaoh's proximity, for it was unguarded. But the sides were slippery and precipitous; I couldn't see how it would help us, but couldn't somehow dismiss it from my mind. I pondered the matter as we climbed the eastern hillside to return to our lines, but wasn't satisfied with any of the projects that occurred to me.

As we reached the brow of the hill we were stopped by a hidden outpost. Not recognizing our dress or speech, they took us for spies, and we came in for some rough handling before being taken to Pharaoh. He was still in council, frowning darkly as his captains argued before him. When I was thrust at his feet he sat back and laughed.

"A fine catch!" he observed. "Achates, you come in good time — though the manner of your appearance is a trifle undignified. You have seen the Libyans' position; what is your opinion?"

Even as he spoke I conceived the plan I'd been seeking ever since I saw that hidden cleft. When I had unfolded it, Rameses turned to his captains. After some discussion a few modifications were made, and the council broke up to make the necessary dispositions.

Before I left the king regarded me thoughtfully. "I thank

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you, Achates," he said. "The gods of Egypt must have brought you to me. I will speak more of this after the battle is won."

* * * * *

"So," I said to Cloanthus, "by this time tomorrow we shall be heroes — or shades." The boy laughed.

"I have heard the heaven of the Egyptians well spoken of," he remarked. "But, by the beard of Zeus! It will be a pity if I don't send some of these Libyans to Hades to explain my absence!"

Sergestus looked up from sharpening a spear. "When we've won this battle," he said, "do you think I might serve a short term with the fleet? Meri-mentu said it could be arranged, and Abastes has been telling me all about ships and navigation."

Pielus muttered darkly. "That fat rascal," he growled. "Isn't there enough fighting on the land for you, that you must want to go looking for it on the sea?"

"Sergestus is afraid we'll beat the Libyans so thoroughly tomorrow that there won't be any fighting left," Cloanthus explained. "I'd like to go with him; but we can't very well both leave you, Achates."

Pielus snorted. "I daresay we shall be able to look after ourselves, if we try very hard," he said, with heavy sarcasm.

I laughed. "A few weeks at sea will be good for you both," I told them. "I'll arrange it. And now — to bed; you'll be up before dawn."

* * * * *

Early next morning a small caravan made its leisurely way along the valley toward the sea. It consisted of a few

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covered wagons drawn by slow oxen; a small herd of cattle; and about twenty men in the robes of the nomads, who rode carelessly, calling and laughing to each other.

A few Libyans appeared on the brow of the western hills, and stared incredulously at this gift from the gods. Presently they came running down, ten score or so, yelling joyfully. The startled nomads halted the wagons and huddled the cattle into their shelter, forming a moving ring about the caravan. But as the Libyans closed in, the wagon covers were thrown down, and from close-woven palisades a whistling hail of arrows poured among them. Very much taken aback, and howling to a different tune, the Libyans hesitated; by rights there should have been only cowering women and children in those wagons. Meanwhile the nomad horsemen had rallied, and produced wicked looking spears. They swept down upon the discomfited Libyans and completed the work of the hidden archers.

A roar of anger from the heights, and a stream of hastily armed Libyans, mostly only half-awake, came tumbling down the slopes to avenge this impudent defeat. The caravan was hurrying northward, and had traversed half the valley before the foremost Libyans reached them. But before more than a few arrows had flown a body of Pharaoh's cavalry swept out of the hidden cleft, and, with a thunder of hooves, were upon them. The Libyans turned, but had no chance to form a fighting line before the horsemen were through them, leaving terrible marks of their passage. From the Libyans' position flowed an ever-increasing torrent of furious, shouting warriors, and in a short time practically their whole force had been lured into the valley. I laughed grimly at the success of our trap; I and my Ilians had formed the delusive caravan.

Then from the eastern hilltop the regiments of Egypt rose with flickering spears; from the northern end of the valley the chariots stormed in a flying hurricane of dust; and from the gorge a swift column of light cavalry skirted the western slopes, cutting off the enemy from their heights. I rose in my saddle and roared with the lust of war as the glittering armies of Egypt fell on the invader.

The Libyans tried to form a battle front, but the chariots tore through and through them. I saw Rameses, a thunderbolt of war, at the head of his chosen squadron; he proved his manhood that day. The cavalry bore the Libyans back upon the spears. Hemmed in on three sides, they fought desperately in an attempt to retreat to the north. The cavalry tried to turn them, but were hampered by the re-forming chariots; the Libyans widened the wedge, and moved slowly toward the sea.

But Pharaoh, crafty in war, had anticipated this. A division of bowmen appeared at the far end of the valley and spread across in the path of the Libyans; they were supported by a reserve of spearmen, and again the Egyptian ring was complete. Seeing the Libyans falter at this check, Rameses charged with the chariots, crumpling and shattering the exhausted rearguard. At the failure of their one hope, the heart went out of the Libyans; they started to throw down their arms, and the battle was won.

The spearmen disarmed and surrounded them. The cavalry rode up the slope to the encampment and took prisoner the thousands of women and children, after a short but lively skirmish with those Libyans who had not gone out to the battle. The chariots drew off and formed into regiments; their losses had been heavy, for they had taken the worst of the fighting. But Pharaoh was unharmed.

PARIS OF TROY

I gathered my little company together; they had suffered woefully. Of the original hundred, fewer than eighty still lived, and of these, few had a whole skin. Cloanthus had been clubbed a bit, to his great disgust; Sergestus proudly displayed an arrowhead still stuck in his sword arm; I had a spear-thrust in my shoulder and an arrow in my knee; also a crack on the head from an axe. Pielus alone was unhurt; he was grinning happily, and was even heard tolerantly to remark what a pity Abastes couldn't have seen the fun. He was red to the elbows, but not with his own blood.

Rameses held a council, and sent for me to come when my wounds had been dressed. Leaning heavily on Pielus, for my wounds had stiffened, and were causing me some pain, I went to the royal pavilion and took my place among the captains. Rameses saw me, and called my name. I knelt before him, as is the custom, and he spoke a few words, took from his neck a chain of gold, and placed it over my head. There was a roar that made me dizzy; I rose, and murmured vaguely. The tent seemed to swim in a red mist, and darken. I heard, as in a dream, the urgent voice of Rameses; an arm caught me as I fell, and I knew no more.

* * * * *

They told me afterward that I'd lost a lot of blood, and was weaker than I knew. Pharaoh wanted to kill with his own hands the minor priest who had allowed me to walk in my condition, but he didn't know who it was, and the man judged it best to say nothing of the matter. A fever took me, and for some time I knew nothing of what was passing. When I came to my right mind I was in Memphis, very weak and listless. But careful nursing brought back my strength,

and I demanded news of my company.

The more seriously wounded were lying in Memphis; the rest had gone, under Pielus' command, with Pharaoh across the Delta. They had surprised the Philistines on the march; unaware of the Libyans' defeat, they were sacking and pillaging the eastern marches. Pharaoh flung them back to the sea, where they took to the sea-rovers' boats; but hardly were they in deep water when the Egyptian fleet appeared around a headland and engaged them.

The result was never in doubt. The rout of their ancestors by Mer-en-ptah was nothing to this devastating defeat. Both enemies completely shattered, the sea-rovers swept away, all threat of invasion had passed. Pharaoh was expected to move on, pushing Egypt's frontier farther east. A triumphant entry was being prepared for his return to Memphis.

All very fine; but where, I wondered, should I go now, to look for war?

The gold chain Pharaoh had given me, by the way, was for valor in the field. I hope I really deserved it.

Chapter Five

THERE IS NOT MUCH WORTH TELLING ABOUT MY LIFE for the next few months. My fears that with the crushing of the invasion there would be no more fighting were quite groundless; there were always troubles of some sort on the boundaries of the Upper Land, and Pharaoh sent me to help keep the peace.

Cloanthus and Sergestus were attached for a time to the fleet, greatly to their joy, although they saw little fighting. Meri-mentu had taken a great fancy to the lads, and gave me news of them when we met from time to time in Thebes or Memphis.

Although there was plenty of bickering on the borders, I managed to spend a good deal of time in Thebes, and, through Meri-mentu, made many friends among the men and women of Pharaoh's court. I grew very fond of this strange, gentle nation, whose customs, religion and ways of thought were so different from our own. I learned to speak the language; even to decipher — though slowly — their quaint picture-symbols. Had it not been for Oenone I might have settled in Egypt; the two years I spent there were certainly among the happiest of my life.

Meri-mentu said that I should. "Why go back to that frightful country of yours, where they are half barbarian, and totally alien to your sympathies?" he said. "Here you

have enough fighting to content you; friends, position, honor — Pharaoh thinks very well of you — and there should be no difficulty about arranging a suitable marriage. You shall marry one of Pharaoh's nieces; she will make you an Egyptian and bring you a province. What do you say?"

Slowly I shook my head. "I'd like to, above all things," I said, "but there's someone in Ilion — "

"There always is," Meri-mentu complained. "No sooner do I make a friend than he gets married, and is consequently lost to me; I have to start all over again."

"You should get married yourself," I said. "Then your friends would come and make love to your wife!"

He shrugged, and smiled. "I suppose I shall, when I'm tired of the sea," he said. "But I'm in no hurry. I might have married, years ago," he added, staring thoughtfully at his wine, "except that she was already married. Perhaps it was as well, in a way; I was born for a bachelor, I think. Since then I've never looked at another woman. Strange, isn't it, how one can remain faithful to a dream?"

His words brought back with an overwhelming sadness the memories I had tried to suppress.

"I came to Egypt to forget just such a dream," I said. "Your story is mine." Then, on a sudden impulse, I told him of my love; he was the first to whom I had ever confided it. When I had finished — feeling somewhat embarrassed at having revealed my inmost thoughts and feelings — Meri-mentu raised his head.

"Had you any particular reason for telling me this — to-night of all nights?" he asked.

"Why, no. I'm sorry if I've been tiresome — "

"My dear fellow, I don't mean that. I'm honored by your confidence, but — it's odd; very odd — "

PARIS OF TROY

For a short time he maintained a thoughtful silence; then without explanation rose from the table, though it was still early.

"There's a case coming before Pharaoh in the morning in which I'm interested," he said. "Shall I see you at the audience?"

"Yes. I've my report to present."

"Look for me, then." And he hurried away, leaving me to make what I could of his odd behavior.

My presence at the next day's audience was much a matter of form. I had recently returned from an expedition against the Nubians up beyond Napata, and my report, properly drawn up by a scribe, was to be formally laid on Pharaoh's knees, for placing among the military archives. I should give him a verbal account later, in private.

I listened without much interest to the matters put before Pharaoh, by now I could understand every word that was said. Presently my name was called. I made the prescribed salutation, and gave him my report.

His high, proud expression relaxed a little, and he glanced quickly through the scroll. "Very satisfactory, Achates," he said. "I will see you after the audience."

I returned to the pillar against which I had been standing, and looked about for Meri-mentu. The hall was dim, however, except for a shaft of light about the throne, and I could not see him.

The audience dragged on. Pharaoh gave short, summary judgments; he had a knack of grasping the fundamentals of a case before it had been fully stated, and his verdicts, though peremptory, were scrupulously fair. He sat back wearily; in spite of the fans he must have been very hot, dressed as he was in the full regalia of his divine rank.

PARIS OF TROY

Meri-mentu touched my arm. "My case is coming on now," he whispered, and laughed softly. "I think it will interest you, Achates."

The name of Thonis was called "in the matter of the shipwrecked strangers." The Governor of the Western Arm came forward, and was given leave to speak.

"Hail, Lord of the Two Lands, beloved of Amen," he began, formally. "I solicit your commands in a matter which I am not authorized to judge."

"Say on," said Pharaoh, resignedly, leaning back.

"A ship was driven ashore in a gale; the shipmen were cared for in a temple near the beach. They were slaves, and took upon them the mark of the god to obtain their freedom. Then they said they were from Achaia, one of six ships, which had become separated in the storm. Being safe from their master's anger, they accused him of ravishment and theft. I therefore arrested the master and all those with him until Pharaoh's wishes were known."

Pharaoh nodded. "Very proper," he said. "The plea being made in Egyptian territory, by servants now of an Egyptian god, the cause is within my jurisdiction. Let the scribes and lawyers come forward. Thonis, state your case."

As Meri-mentu had an interest in the matter, I listened with more attention than usual to this ordinary-seeming affair. But when Thonis started to mention names I had a shock. And when the doors at the far end of the hall were opened to admit the prisoners, I drew a deep breath, and muttered a curse. For the man was Paris.

Meri-mentu laughed softly. "I said you'd be interested," he murmured. "Now do you see why your words were so oddly timed?"

"It's not very amusing for me to see a prince of my own

country being brought like a criminal to trial before the king," I retorted sharply, "whatever my private views about him may be."

"Patience; and look at the woman," he whispered.

Poets have sung, and will sing forever, of the beauty of Helen of Sparta. Who am I, to describe her inconceivable, blinding loveliness? I am old, now, and the fires are burning low; but the memory of her peerless perfection, as she stood proudly before Pharaoh's throne, still makes my pulse quicken. A shaft of sunlight made a glory of her hair. I heard Meri-mentu breathe "*Hat-hor!*" She was a veritable goddess of beauty. Robed in white, with delicate gold at neck and hem, her loveliness shone like a flame in that somber hall.

Even Pharaoh was impressed. He regarded her for a long time and when he spoke his voice was gentle.

"Lady Helen," he said, "I cannot believe that with such beauty you have taken a willing part in this lamentable affair; but you will understand that I must question you, that right may prevail."

She turned to Paris, she was clearly unacquainted with the Egyptian tongue. Pharaoh glanced about him for an interpreter; his eye fell on me, and he beckoned me forward.

"You must be my mouthpiece, Achates," he said. His pronunciation of my name was sufficiently like our own to fall familiarly on the ear of Paris. He turned sharply, and came to me with outstretched hands.

"Achates!" he cried. "By all that's wonderful, what are you doing here?" He paused, recalling with some embarrassment our last parting, and laughed nervously. "I thought I never wanted to see you again; but by Zeus! I'm so glad to find you here! As an Ilian, I know you'll stand by me — I seem to be in rather a mess. For — for her sake, Achates!"

"Whose, Helen's?" I answered coldly. He flushed, and glanced diffidently at the Spartan, who was listening in some surprise to this touching reunion. Pharaoh's voice broke in upon us.

"It seems that you are acquainted," he said. "Until the case is settled, Achates, you will please confine yourself to the evidence. Ask him how he came to be thrown up on our shores."

I translated, and Paris replied, pausing now and then as I rendered his story in Egyptian.

"I sailed from Achaia with five other ships," he said. "We had been at Sparta and Lacedaemon, worshipping at the temple of Apollo. We were caught in a northerly gale and separated. My ship ran before it, and piled up on the beach where we were found. Soon after that we were arrested. I hear that my slaves — a sorry, ungrateful lot — have been saying all sorts of things —"

"We will take their evidence later," Rameses broke in. "Now, tell me exactly who he is."

I explained, without reference to Paris, and Pharaoh nodded. "All this agrees with the account given by the Governor," he said. "Who is the lady Helen? His wife?"

He watched intently as I put this question to Paris.

"In a sense, yes," said Paris, avoiding my eye. I gave his answer to Pharaoh, without change, without comment.

"She is an Achaian?"

"Yes."

"Where did you marry her?"

"In Lacedaemon."

"With the consent of her father, and according to the Achaian law?"

"Yes."

PARIS OF TROY

"He lies!" broke in a voice from the back of the hall. "She was already a wife!" A fat little seaman pushed his way forward. Guards would have seized him for what amounted to sacrilege, but Pharaoh, his eyes never leaving Paris' face, waved them aside.

"What does he say?"

I told him.

"Is this true?"

Paris made no reply. After a moment Pharaoh turned to Helen. "Is this true?" he repeated. "Were you a wife?"

"Yes," Helen replied. "I am wife of Menelaus, and daughter of Tyndareus of Sparta." Her low, clear voice was not the least of her charms.

"How do you come to be in this man's company? Did you leave your home willingly?"

"I did. But I wish I never had."

Paris stared at her in surprise. Ignoring him, she went on quickly, "He fell in love with me. But then, of course, he was bound to, they all do, so I expected it. But he kept on bothering me, and I thought it would be only kind to listen, and then tell him, gently and compassionately, as I always do, that it wasn't any use . . ."

I raised my hand, and gave this astonishing speech to Pharaoh. He stared rather, and she went on.

" . . . but when he told me about the dream in which Aphrodite had promised him the fairest woman in the world, I didn't put him off all at once. Because, of course, it obviously meant me. I mean, you can see for yourself — I owe a lot to Aphrodite, I'm told." Here she touched her hair, and simpered.

There was a definite stir as I translated. Paris was gazing

at her in fascinated wonder, as if seeing her for the first time. Pharaoh took a deep breath.

"Let her go on," he said; and there was a twinkle at the back of his eyes. Helen required no persuading.

"It mightn't have happened if my husband had been there, but his grandfather had died, and he'd gone on some business about the succession. I was lonely, and bored; I mean, after having all the princes in Achaia running after me for simply years, being married isn't much fun after I'd got over the novelty of it. And, of course, if he'd rather go off to settle the affairs of that tiresome old Atreus, instead of looking after me — and my dear little baby only two months old . . ."

Pharaoh's lips moved soundlessly. Meri-mentu choked back a laugh and muttered an epithet.

". . . and he kept on and on about Aphrodite's promise—"

Pharaoh raised a hand. "I have heard several allusions to the promises of Aphrodite, whom I believe to be one of your goddesses," he said. "What are their relevance?"

"I can explain that," I said; and gave him a brief outline of Paris' history. He shot me a searching glance.

"This upon your honor, Achates?" he asked.

"By Pharaoh's divinity," I replied.

"Beloved of Amen, I can vouch that I heard the story from Achates before he knew anything of this matter," said Meri-mentu. Pharaoh nodded, satisfied.

"So, to pay your debt to the goddess, you listened," he said. Helen smiled happily.

"That was it, exactly," she agreed. "I knew you would be kind, and understanding; I mean, of course I thought there couldn't be anything really wrong. But he wanted me to go away at once — just as I was — " with horror, "but of course I couldn't. Just imagine me — me! — with only

one dress! So we took all the clothes I could find, and some trinkets. Of course, I have so many jewels; men were always giving me things before we were married — I couldn't bother to see if they were really all mine, though I expect they were. Of course, I'm terribly sorry for Menelaus, everybody will be; but if I'd ever dreamt what it would be like on that frightful ship! I'd never been on the sea before — except," she added, complacently, "when I was carried off by Theseus. I wasn't thirteen, then," she observed with pride.

Pharaoh rubbed his chin; his lips were twitching.

"That's why I was so careful this time," she said, brightly, "because then we were doing the Dance of the Maidens, and of course I hadn't anything on. Not that I blame Theseus exactly, but I had to wear his cloak all the way to Attika, and it wasn't at all comfortable. But my brothers — you've heard of them, of course — Kastor and Polydeukes — we call them the Heavenly Twins, though they're always up to some mischief. Where was I? — oh yes; they came and rescued me, and we paid Theseus out properly, because we took his mother back with us as my slave — and a silly old woman she was, too — and I made her wear nothing but that same cloak for a year —"

"Is she really saying all this?" Pharaoh demanded, suspiciously.

I bowed. "She doesn't even stop to breathe," I told him, with reluctant admiration.

"Her life story is fascinating in the extreme," he observed, "but if she could possibly be induced to confine her — evidence — to the case at issue . . ."

Helen was inclined to be indignant. "I'm only explaining why we took the clothes and things, though why such a fuss . . . Well, when we got on the ship there was a fright-

ful storm, and I said to Paris it looks as if Zeus didn't want me to come with you, after all. I think you'd better turn the ship around and take me back, but of course he couldn't because of the wind, you'd never believe how it blew! And Poseidon must have been angry too, because the waves . . . And then I was sick, and it was so dark and cold. And Paris didn't take any notice of me, because he was being ill, too, and I just don't know how I lived through the night. And then there was a dreadful crash, and I fell over and hurt my knee—I can show you the bruise—” Pharaoh hastily conceded the point—“and the men said we were wrecked. Then they all ran away, and we had nothing to eat but some frightful biscuits, and then some men came and put us in prison, and—to cut a long story short, and I expect you know the rest—here I am!”

“Alive and well,” remarked Pharaoh, sardonically.

“Yes, indeed; that's a good thing, isn't it? Because suppose I'd been lost at the bottom of the sea! My poor Menelaus—and all those other nice Achaian boys—would never have got over it. Never!” she repeated, firmly.

Paris put a hand to his bewildered brow. Slightly out of breath I glanced at Meri-mentu expressively. But he was regarding Helen—as were all the others in that hushed and wondering hall. There was a silence.

Then, “You still claim her to be your wife?” Pharaoh asked Paris.

“In the eyes of the gods, yes!” he replied, defiantly.

“You astonish me. I should have thought . . . However, my views can be of no conceivable interest. Bring forward the shipman.”

While the perspiring little man was being questioned Paris muttered something to Helen, to which she replied in

a low tone that only he could hear. He stared at her, his brow puckered. She took no further notice of him, but looked about her with smiling self-possession. The seaman's evidence was soon taken; the priest of the temple was called; and the case was closed.

"Have you anything more to say before judgment is passed upon you?" Pharaoh asked, rather apprehensively. Paris shook his head dumbly. Helen flashed a radiant smile at Rameses that made him blink.

"I'm sure you won't be hard on me!" she said, archly. "When I get back to Sparta I'll tell Menelaus how charming you've been —"

"Thank you," Pharaoh murmured. Helen laughed merrily. "It's the least I can do," she assured him. "And please — please don't blame Paris too much, because there's every excuse for him, isn't there? and he did have that dream, and that makes a difference, doesn't it? But I've been told my beauty drives men mad; I'm sure it's not my fault. But what's the good of being beautiful if you don't get something out of it sometimes? It's dull enough in Sparta, goodness knows; but I shall be glad to get back, even if Menelaus is cross, just at first. But he won't be for long, will he; do you think?"

"You have nothing to add to your story?"

"N-no, I think that's all . . ."

Pharaoh sighed with relief, and pondered awhile. The scribes made ready to take down his judgment. He leaned back, and surveyed Paris.

"You are a prince of Ilion," he said. "Had I not been well served for two years by a brave and resourceful son of your country — give him my words, Achates; you are merely my mouth — I should have gained a very poor opinion of it from what I have heard today of your behavior. It

is unfortunately against the law of Egypt for me to pass sentence of death on strangers cast upon these shores by adverse winds, or I should have done so to avenge the Achaians. You, a representative of a kingly house, abused the hospitality of your host, seduced his wife and stole her away. Moreover, you plundered the house in which you had been a guest. Were you a son of mine I should know very well how to deal with you. As it is, you shall leave Egypt within three days, at the end of which time you will be regarded as an enemy, and so treated. You will go alone."

Paris went white, and clenched his fists. Pharaoh took no notice of him thereafter. He turned to Helen; the hard anger melted from his face, and he almost smiled.

"You, Helen," he said, "will remain in Egypt, until Menelaus comes himself to claim you. It will be your seducer's responsibility to tell your husband where you are; though how he will induce Menelaus to believe him is a problem I leave to him — with deep satisfaction. I have no doubt that your good friends Zeus and Poseidon will waft your husband to you without mischance — once he is persuaded of the truth. But until that time you will remain in the temple of Hat-hor, in charge of the priestess. Your reunion will doubtless be moving — I should like to be present," he added, in an undertone to himself. "If you have any parting words, say them now; for it is unlikely that you will meet again."

Helen turned to Paris and laid a white hand on his arm. They spoke together in a swift undertone that I was careful not to overhear. As Paris was led away, I told the captain of the guard to take him to my lodging.

"There is nothing more to interest us," Meri-mentu whispered. "Come with me; I've something to tell you."

We went to his rooms. As he poured wine, "Well?" he

demanded, his eyes brimming with laughter.

"I feel somewhat dazed."

"You fail to surprise me. We'll drink," he said, slowly, "to a beautiful, and frail, but very gallant lady!"

"Meaning whom?"

"Helen of Sparta."

I laughed shortly. "Beautiful, I concede," I said, "but I heard you use a different expression."

"Was I as audible as that? But then, Achates, there was something infinitely more significant that you didn't overhear. They assumed I didn't understand Achaian, I suppose; but their leavetaking —"

"Spare me that!"

"Wait. It is possible that we misjudged her."

"What makes you think so?"

"For one thing, the incongruity between her high, proud expression at first, and the utter heartlessness and frivolity of all she said. It was a shade too much. For the rest — I will try and remember her exact words. You recall that she laid her hand on his arm: 'Well,' she said, 'I've done the best I could for you, my darling; though it went to my heart. Remember me kindly; I shall always love you.'"

"Then she deliberately played the fool before Pharaoh?"

"I'm sure of it."

"Why?"

"She didn't know that it was against the law to kill strangers. She told him so. He said; 'There are a hundred thousand spears in Ilion, I'll bring them to set you free.'"

"Oho! What did she say to that?"

"She looked anxious, and said, 'Keep them in Ilion, against the time Menelaus comes looking for me — with all the princes of Achaia!'"

"Excellent advice, which Priam will no doubt endorse. This settles it, Meri-mentu; I must go home."

He nodded soberly. "I won't dissuade you — now," he said. "But I shall look for your return."

"Don't count on it."

"I no longer count on anything in the world."

"Is this cynicism, or disillusion?"

Meri-mentu smiled ruefully. "Disappointment. I had a plan, but Helen upset it. She's clever. With her experience of men she must have taken Pharaoh's measure at a glance; you saw the effect she had on him. I'm quite sure he saw through it, he's no fool. But when deep calls to deep —"

"Yes, but what plan of yours did Helen upset?"

Meri-mentu regarded me quizzically. "I hadn't intended to mention it," he said, "especially as it went wrong. The fact is, I bribed that seaman to speak when he did — oh, it was all true — but Pharaoh is inclined to be a law unto himself. I hoped he would kill Paris."

"Why so bitter against him?"

"My dear Achates, I've not the least interest in that unpleasant young man. But his death would have cleared your road to Oenone."

* * * * *

We wasted no time. I provided Paris with clothes and money, and within three days had him aboard the *Nymph of Ida*. He was abstracted and silent, speaking little until I wished him farewell.

"You've been very good to me, Achates; better than I deserve," he said. "I shan't forget. When I'm back in Ilion, I'll prove my gratitude."

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"The one way you could do that," I told him, "would be by going back to Oenone."

"That's the one thing I can't do," he said. "Less now than ever. Since I met Helen I know that I never really loved Oenone, as she understands love — and as I do, now. It would have been better if we'd met, and parted; or never met at all. I've behaved badly to her, and I'll do all I can to make it up to her. She shall have her freedom, to find happiness — elsewhere."

"That's impossible."

"It wouldn't be fair — to either of us — to go back."

I sighed. "What will you do about Menelaus?" I asked him.

"What do you advise?"

"Nothing — on your own responsibility. If he invokes the confederation it's going to be serious. Tell Priam everything; let him decide. If he sends a suitably contrite embassy to Sparta, with an offer to defray the cost of getting Helen back, things might be smoothed over."

Paris grinned suddenly. "A job for you, Achates," he said. "The man on the spot; saw and heard everything —"

"Not if I know it!" I said firmly. "I'm staying here!"

But privately I told Abastes to hurry back for me.

Chapter Six

PHARAOH SHOWED SYMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING. HE released me — he was kind enough to say with regret — and loaded me with gifts. Cloanthus and Sergestus were recalled from the fleet. I assembled my company, told them that war was likely in Ilion, and gave them their choice — to sail back with me, or remain in Egypt. Some of them had married, and elected to stay. Of the hundred who had left Antandros I brought sixty-odd back. There were enough profits to keep them from any need to go adventuring again; nor were the dependents of the others forgotten. To Cloanthus and Sergestus I gave one each of the sea-raiders' galleys, the *Nymph of Ida* I sent out trading for me.

Then I went to see Oenone.

She was not at the cottage, but, knowing her haunts, I rode down to a certain tree-ringed pool, quiet, deep and secret. Oenone was there, swimming. I sat down by her clothes, my back to the water, and waited. Presently I heard a gasp.

"Oh!" she said, faintly.

"The name," I said, "is Achates. And I promise not to look."

"Achates! Oh, how glad I am to see you! even your back is welcome home!"

A pair of round, damp arms were thrown about my neck, and she laid her cheek for a moment to mine. "Wait a little,

until — no, I can't wait. Close your eyes and turn around, I want to see your face! Why, you've lost your beard — and how brown you are!"

"And you," I said, "are — "

"I told you to close your eyes!"

"But not to keep them closed."

"Remember what happened to Actaeon!"

"That's why I didn't look."

She laughed. "Perhaps you're not interested in me any more, since you've seen Helen."

"So you've heard about that?"

"Yes. Alex told me; everything."

"Has he been here?"

"No, Rhodope's. I happened to be there. He — he's divorced me, Achates."

"He told me he meant to. For your sake."

"I know. He thinks — I'll be happier . . . "

There was a long silence; then she sighed. "Is Helen — very beautiful?"

"Very."

"Has she stolen your heart, too?"

"That troublesome organ did not go with me to Egypt."

"Oh! Yes, I remember you said . . . But perhaps it changed its mind, and followed you."

"It has a singularly constant nature."

"I expect you were offered others, to take its place."

"Thousands. I lay them at your feet. There are also certain other trinkets, at the cottage . . . "

As we walked up the hillside Oenone asked about my journey, and adventures abroad. "I've been mixed up in a little bickering here and there," I told her. "What news in Ilion?"

"Aeneas is home. I met him at Anchises'. He hadn't for-

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gotten me —" here I made an obvious comment, and she laughed. "You'll hardly know him, Achates; he's nearly as tall as you, and very good-looking. He's in love with Creusa," she added.

"Oho! Is that inspired guesswork, or —"

"Of course not; he told me all about it."

"And Creusa?"

"He's very modest and diffident; but I should say — yes."

"He'll have plenty of rivals. Have you seen her?"

"No. I'd like to; she sounds sweet."

"She was, as a child. This is splendid news; I'm very fond of them both."

"I don't think Priam is very encouraging. Perhaps Aeneas will tell you more himself."

I had brought a few things from Egypt that I thought Oenone might like. She was like a child as she unwrapped them. There were such things as a polished silver mirror; some wonderfully embroidered silk, taken from the northern invaders, brought by them from the far east; drinking cups and platters of chased and figured copper and gold; some necklaces, bracelets, and a scarab ring; a thin, keen hunting knife with a golden hilt, shaped in the form of mummified Osiris, the gentle Lord of Amenti; perfumed preparations for the skin, in alabaster — she cried out over these, for they were new to her —; and one or two little statuettes of delicate craftsmanship. She surveyed the full tale with sparkling eyes.

"This is an absolute treasury, Achates!" she declared.

"Little enough, and hardly worthy of your acceptance."

"You can't have much time for fighting! How did you know so well what would please me? This glorious silk . . ."

"I love you, Oenone."

For a few moments she was silent. Then, "I know," she

said, softly. "It's a complicated world, Achates. Nobody deserves happiness more than you. But while Alex lives I must be trite, and say — be my friend, my dearly-beloved brother, Achates."

"Why? You are free, now and — I hate being brutal — Alex loves Helen."

"I was prepared — I told you, long ago — for him to have affairs."

"This is not an affair, Oenone. It's a passion."

"He'll never see her again."

"Oh, won't he! Wait until she's back in Sparta. If he doesn't go to her, she'll come to him."

"Menelaus won't let her out of his sight again."

I grinned. "He may wink a blind eye. She's a handful. And far too beautiful. Some day he may be glad to let someone else hold the stick to beat men off."

Oenone laughed. "Achates! what a very unexalted view! But if he loses his respect for Helen, he may keep some for his honor."

"Not a second time. He'll take her back once, but only once."

"His sense of property, then."

"He'll find consolation."

"You seem very sure."

"I've seen Helen. She's too clever; he'll find her uncomfortable to live with. Besides, Alex told me he had already been unfaithful — Menelaus, that is — that's one of the reasons she went with Alex. I mean, while her baby was on the way . . . the girl went with him when he went to see about his grandfather's affairs."

"She won't forgive him that, no woman would. I'm sorry for the baby. There are only two types of women, and I don't

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think Helen's in the fond-mother class. Do you know, Achates, I sometimes think that if I'd had a child, Alex wouldn't have left me. And," she added, in a low voice, "perhaps I shouldn't have minded so much if he had."

* * * * *

I spent the night at Rhodope's — as usual, when I went to see Oenone — and rode next day to Dardanos. Anchises was well enough, and presented Aeneas with great pride. The boy was all I had hoped; and we talked far into the night of his adventures, and mine. There was a message from Priam awaiting me, bidding me to Troy. Aeneas and I made the journey together. On the way he told me of his love for Creusa.

"How does Priam take it?"

"Not very favorably, I'm afraid. He's still suspicious of our house, quite unnecessarily; and his own succession is well assured — into the next generation, or nearly. Have you heard that Andromache's baby is about due?"

"Your father told me. I'd have thought Priam would have been glad to unite the two families; especially now, with the possibility of war."

"I say, Achates, do you think it's likely? Everyone's talking about it, but I think it's too good to be true."

His ingenuous eagerness amused me. "If not, I'll take you with me when I go back to Egypt."

"Are you really going back?"

"That will depend — on a number of things . . ."

He shot a mischievous glance at me. "On Oenone, for instance?" he said. I regarded him severely.

"There's a deal too much gossip at your house."

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He laughed. "Oh, I'm discretion personified," he assured me. "I remembered her, and she spoke rather — well, affectionately — of you. The inference —"

"Was distinctly wide of the mark," I said.

Aeneas nodded sagely, "So you're going back to Egypt. I know."

I had to laugh. "We were talking about your love affairs, not mine. Have you unburdened the overflowing heart to young Creusa?"

"Yes. I may ask Daddy. An entrancing prospect."

"When?"

"I'm on my way."

I thought for a moment. "I don't know what Priam wants with me," I said, "but —"

Aeneas broke in with a laugh. "A hearty vote of thanks, with due recompense, for services rendered to his engaging but wayward offspring when he was ordered out of Egypt," he said, confidently.

"Is there anyone who doesn't know the story?" I asked, with some exasperation.

"Nobody at all. You're by way of being a national hero, Achates; he's spreading your praises everywhere."

"My gratitude is boundless. All the same —"

"With your characteristic modesty you would prefer to remain anonymous. But I've a very good idea — the one you were just going to suggest."

"And what, my omniscient seer, was I about to suggest?" I asked.

"That you should strike while the iron is malleable; blush with your well-known modest charm, and say 'Priam, nothing for myself, I beg; but my devoted young friend Aeneas — a charming boy — wishes to marry your own Creusa.'

He'll then push her at you with both hands; and I shall be waiting outside, in case you misinterpret his generosity, fall a victim, as better men than you have done, to her charms, and take her home with you. Yes, Achates, a very good idea. I've no objection at all."

And that, though somewhat differently expressed, is roughly what happened.

True to his threat, Aeneas waited outside the door. "What did he say?" he asked, anxiously.

"No decision. You are both young — you can afford to wait — that sort of thing. But well received. I think you may safely hope."

"Oh, I shall. Thanks very much Achates. I'll do the same for you, one day." He grinned at me, and went flying off to find Creusa.

Cloanthus was waiting at my house. "I heard you were in town," he said. "You aren't thinking of going off again anywhere, are you?"

"Not at the moment. Why?"

"Well, Sergestus and I had an idea of going to look for trouble on our own account; but if you had anything in mind we'd naturally rather come with you."

"I'm waiting to see if there will be trouble over Helen."

"Oh, that! No, that affair won't come to anything. If it does, keep it going until we get back. I'd like a crack at the Achaians."

I laughed. "Where did you think of going?" I asked him.

"East and north," he said. "By sea. Up the Propontis and along the coast of the Euxine. We want to see if there really are Amazons beyond Paphlagon. Then we're going across to Scythia, unless the Hittites are still fighting."

I nodded. "That should make an interesting trip," I said.

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"Be careful of the Scythians; they're shy and suspicious, and if they get nervous they shoot first. But if you win their confidence they'll die for you." I told him some of my experiences with that strange people, and he left, well satisfied. He sailed from Abydos a week or two later; some of the men from the Egyptian expedition went with him, so I had no fears. He had won his spurs in Egypt.

* * * * *

A son was born to Hector, and Priam held a great feast to present the child to the nobility of Ilion. There was great enthusiasm, and Hector looked self-conscious but mightily pleased and proud. It was a noisy night; even Priam let go a little, and when the small bundle was held high such a shout arose as made the child start and burst into violent tears. But Hector, flushing deeply, gave it his finger to hold, and amid laughter carried it away to its waiting nurse.

We were listening to a minstrel singing an old song of the first great kings of Ilion when the captain of the guard came and whispered to Priam. The king's eyebrows rose, and he glanced towards Paris; spoke low and seriously to Hector, and raised his hand.

"Lords and men of Ilion," he said, "two chiefs of Achaia have come to Troy with a message from Menelaus, king of Sparta."

There was some cheering. Paris was raised aloft, flushing and embarrassed, and the young men about him were distressingly audible in their comments. Aeneas cocked an expressive eyebrow at me.

Priam went on: "I shall ask them to honor us at our board. Let their reception be worthy of their mission."

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Malicious laughter ran around the hall; Priam smiled, and made a motion to the captain of the guard.

"We are going to listen to some very great foolishness," I said to Aeneas.

He frowned. "I formed a poor opinion of the Achaians in Thessaly," he observed. "It will be good to see the bubble of their conceit pricked a trifle."

"Does nobody in all this astonishing country take them seriously? Have they forgotten what Idomeneus told us?"

Aeneas glanced at me with some amusement. "You are ungrateful in the extreme, Achates," he said. "Here we are, doing all we can to save you the cost of another expedition by bringing a nice little war to your doorstep; and you do nothing but look gloomy and disapproving!"

"I prefer to do my fighting on someone else's doorstep," I told him. "One's knickknacks are less likely to get hurt."

The great doors were thrown open. "Diomedes, king of Aitolia, and Odysseus, Lord of Ithaca and the Isles!"

Priam rose courteously. "Two names well-known in these halls," he said urbanely. "We welcome such distinguished ambassadors." He motioned them to places hurriedly prepared, but they stood before him.

"We are not here to exchange compliments; nor will we eat or drink with you until the message we bring from Menelaus, king of Sparta, has been answered satisfactorily," said Diomedes. "Will you receive that message now, or at a more private audience?"

Priam leaned back and regarded him with a half-smile. "What does it matter?" he said. "The purpose of your mission is well known to everyone here."

"As you please. We have come to demand Helen, the wife of Menelaus, who was seduced and stolen away by your

son Paris; together with the restitution of all he plundered from the Spartan treasury. Also a fitting reparation."

Priam smiled. "You have had your journey for nothing," he said. "Helen is not here, she has never been in Ilion. Nor have we seen the treasure you mention."

For a moment Diomedes looked genuinely surprised. "We were told that your son had returned to Troy —"

"That is true; he sits with us."

At a glance from Priam Paris rose, and bowed gravely to the ambassadors. "I am Paris," he said, steadily.

Diomedes surveyed him dispassionately. "Do you confirm this — rather astonishing statement?" he demanded.

"Certainly. Would you have me give the lie to my own father? Besides, it happens to be true."

A murmur of laughter rippled around the hall. Diomedes began to lose his temper.

"Then where is the lady Helen, if not at the side of the man to whom she entrusted her life and honor?" he asked.

That stung Paris; he flushed deeply, and went white. "She is in Egypt," he said sullenly.

"Egypt?" repeated the ambassadors, in one breath.

"Our ship was blown from its course, and we fell into the hands of Pharaoh. He detained Helen, and drove me from the kingdom."

Diomedes' lip curled. "A man of perception," he said. "Am I expected to tell Menelaus that he must go to Egypt to claim his wife?"

"Pharaoh will give her to nobody else."

Diomedes turned to Priam. "I don't know if this is an attempt to fool me," he said. "It sounds preposterous, and until I am considerably more satisfied I refuse to accept this incredible story."

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Priam shrugged indifferently. "My son has spoken; you have my own assurances. I have nothing to add."

Odysseus, who until now had said nothing, stepped forward.

"Priam, Lord of Ilion," he said, smoothly, "if we can, we want to avert war. We are here in a just cause; our reception leaves much to be desired in the courtesy usually shown to an ambassador. I make no complaint; we of Achaia set a high standard, which we do not necessarily expect other nations to adopt. I warn you, though, that in treating us with scorn and mockery you insult, not only Diomedes and me; not Menelaus, on whose behalf we are here; but a confederacy of all the great houses of Achaia, sworn to protect and avenge Helen. I implore you to consider well before you send us back to tell Menelaus what we have heard tonight."

"Ilion stands by my son, right or wrong. We have accepted his story, it is easily proved. Let Menelaus ask for his wife of Pharaoh. She is not here."

"It is possible that your story is true; yet we must have proof before we leave Ilion. Menelaus is going to ask us why he should believe Helen is not in Troy. You have given your word; how much trust will he put in that, after trusting your son in Sparta? Would you believe, moreover, if you were he, that the man who could win the love of Helen, for whom the flower of Achaian knighthood contended, would desert her at the first breath of danger, such as he knew he must encounter in his flight? And should he be persuaded, he is going to ask why he should be put to the danger, trouble and expense of an expedition to Egypt; for all we know, war with Pharaoh; while Helen's ravisher stays comfortably at home? No, my lord; it is too much."

"Then what are we expected to do?"

"I leave your good judgment to suggest an answer."

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"My lord Odysseus, you have spoken in terms more becoming an ambassador than your companion; I will answer you in the same spirit. It is true that Helen is in Egypt, but I can offer no proof. The goods taken by her from Sparta are also in Pharaoh's safekeeping until Menelaus claims them; again, there is only my word for that. We do not want war with Achaia, but neither do we fear it. There seems to me to be a great deal of unnecessary disturbance being made about what is, after all, a small matter. Where would the world be, if war was to be the consequence of every elopement?"

"You regard the honor of a king very lightly."

"His wife showed me the example."

"He will know how to deal with his wife. He has also an account with her seducer."

"Then let him come, like a man, and settle it — with his wife's seducer."

"The suggestion shall be made to him."

Paris interposed. "You may tell him that it is more than a suggestion," he said, firmly. "It is a defiance."

I saw Hector nod approval, and there was a murmur from the tables.

Odysseus looked about him, smiling a little. "Yet another expedition for Menelaus to undertake," he commented, dryly. "He will have travelled considerably before this matter is settled."

"He may be spared the necessity of returning from Troy," Paris said. "He might come here first, moreover, and save himself the trouble of going to Egypt."

Odysseus regarded him with some amusement. "Fine words, young man," he remarked.

Aeneas stood up. "I have heard even finer, in Thessaly,"

he said. "Uttered," he added, "by Achaians; and with far less intention. I speak for Dardania; my word is that Paris is right. If Menelaus had a quarrel with him, let him come and fight it out. If, however, he chooses to come to Ilion behind the shields of his friends, he will find that spears are not lacking to uphold Paris' cause."

"Well said, Aeneas!" observed Hector. "My lords, those words stand for Ilion."

Odysseus turned to Priam. "My instructions were to deliver the message, and to wait three days for a satisfactory reply. I cannot believe that reflection will not modify somewhat the views expressed here tonight. For three days, then, we will wait, at the house of Antenor, who has kindly offered us shelter."

Priam nodded. "An answer shall be given you," he said. "Also, if you will be so kind, I will entrust you with a letter to my sister, Hesione, of whom I have heard nothing for many years."

There was a breathless silence, while Priam and Odysseus looked into each other's eyes. Then, very slowly, Odysseus nodded.

"You will recall, perhaps," Priam went on, softly, "that when Troy was burnt — by an Achaian — my sister was given — by an Achaian — to Telamon, the son of Aeacus, also an Achaian. Antenor will tell you how he was received in Achaia — which, as you so rightly said, has standards of courtesy quite its own — when I sent him to claim her return."

Odysseus found nothing to say.

Priam spoke very softly. "Strange isn't it, that after so long an Achaian should come to Troy, seeking an Achaian woman — who is not even here — and should be surprised

at being received without enthusiasm? One might almost regard it as — retribution."

"I understand you — perfectly," Odysseus said. "I think we shall waste our time by waiting three days."

"By no means. Antenor has an excellent memory; he will relate the whole episode."

Odysseus turned on his heel; and Priam laughed gently.

For some time after the ambassadors had withdrawn Priam sat silent and thoughtful, while the hall buzzed with excited comment and speculation. Then he raised his hand.

"My lords, and men of Ilion," he said. "I was about to announce, when we were so — ah, rudely — interrupted . . ." He allowed the laughter to subside, then — "that I have tonight given my consent to the marriage of my daughter Creusa," he went on. "The young man — the very young man — to whom she is promised — " Aeneas was sitting up, his eyes wide — "enjoys my highest esteem and favor. By this marriage our two greatest houses will be united, thus accomplishing my dearest and oldest ambition. I hardly need to mention the name of Aeneas, son of Anchises of Dardania."

The popularity of this match was measured by the terrific cheering that greeted its announcement. Even Priam seemed rather surprised. The truth was that Ilion had more than a touch of war-fever in its blood that night, and the end of an old feud, the beginning of a new and powerful alliance, met with the highest approval — quite apart from the love we had for both the young people.

Aeneas rose, and made acknowledgment in a neat, modest little speech. As he sat down he whispered to me, "Paris did me a good turn when he eloped with Helen!"

I told you he was shrewd.

Chapter Seven

WHY ON EARTH WAS THAT YOUNG FOOL PARIS EVER LET out of Troy without a warder?" Idomeneus wrote to me with justifiable exasperation. "We'd all got over Helen — forgotten her. Here am I, happily married, and hoping for an heir before long; and now Menelaus has summoned the confederacy. Even Odysseus, its author, played mad to try and get out of it. But it's no use, we're bound to honor the oath; and Menelaus is out for blood. There's more in it than merely Helen, as I expect you realize; Agamemnon has been working his brother up for motives of his own. He's very ambitious; he fancies himself as a general, and will command the largest army ever brought together in Achaia. He's had his eye on Troy for years, and this is a heaven-sent opportunity. The Achaian traders don't like paying toll for passage up the Hellespont to the Euxine, and are envious of your command over the land-routes from the east. It would suit them very well if Troy were reduced and the narrows freed. They are backing Agamemnon and Menelaus, but *sub rosa*; of course everything will be prompted by outraged honor. Take my advice and keep out of it, if you can. It's a sordid business at best, and I'd hate to cross swords with you after all we've done together. But I don't see how I can avoid being pulled in."

Priam held similar views. The Achaians' jealousy of the

wealth and commerce of Troy was no secret. It was with precisely this in mind that the new city had been made impregnable. For the same reason nobody expected Menelaus to take up Paris' challenge — Paris least of all; though to do him justice he would have met Menelaus had he come. But it seemed to me that the Achaians were being grievously underrated; it was not good enough, to my mind, to shut ourselves in Troy and let them break upon our walls. Sooner or later we must meet and defeat them.

Distant danger never seems so real as immediate peril. Apart from appointing Hector to command the Ilion forces, and sending messages to allies and tributaries of Troy, Priam took no active measures to meet the threat. The Achaians certainly couldn't come before next spring, at the earliest; but much might have been done during the intervening months.

I had news of the Achaians from Abastes. I was in Antandros once when the *Nymph of Ida* came in from a long and profitable voyage. He told me that Aulis in Boeotia had been made the rendezvous, being equally convenient for ships coming south from Phthia and Thessaly, and north from Argolis and the coast countries. The inland nations were already building ships there. He told me with a grin that he'd done a very good trade in bronze deck fittings he'd brought from Crete. The muster of ships and nations was called for the early spring.

Meanwhile Aeneas married Creusa and retired to a house he had built not far from Cebren, where they lived simply but in perfect content.

All that summer I lived in a house my father had left me, but which I had not used before. It was on a farm between Cebren and the mountain; close, therefore, to Aeneas and

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to Oenone. None of us had many visitors, but we got on very well together, Creusa and Oenone soon becoming great friends and confidantes.

One day Polybus, a son of Antenor, called on me while on a hunting trip. He asked me next time I was in Troy to call on his father, who wished to speak to me. I promised to do so, although Antenor and I had little in common. I was so curious that I made a special journey a day or two later.

This Antenor was a merchant-prince of Troy, and in my opinion the most thorough-paced scoundrel of all that unsavory collection. He was quite unscrupulous and ruthless in his dealings, although, strangely enough, he suffered agonies of nervousness and apprehension while a project was being carried out. He was married to Theano, priestess of Athene in Troy, and a particular friend of the queen's. I detested both of them, though I was friendly with their three sons.

I was on my guard as soon as he began treating me with unnecessary effusiveness. For awhile we said little of importance, but when he judged that his Naxos wine had mellowed me somewhat, he started talking about my experience in Egypt.

"You have a rising reputation," he told me. "I hear that Pharaoh holds you in high respect. Paris and Aeneas sing your praises, and Priam intends to put you on the council. You should go far."

I shrugged indifferently.

"I suppose you are ambitious, Achates?"

"On the contrary. My tastes are very simple."

"You are rising, then, in spite of yourself."

"You are kind enough to say so."

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For a short time he regarded me furtively. His eyes were never still.

"What does your friend Idomeneus think of this quarrel with Achaia?"

"I have not seen him for over two years; before it happened."

"No, but you have heard from him, haven't you? Quite recently."

"You are well informed."

"These things get about."

I had told nobody — not even Oenone — of the letter. One of my people must have been indiscreet, or treacherous. I resolved to find out, later.

"Of course, he will join the Achaians?"

"He is married now, I believe."

"So are Agamemnon and Odysseus; that counts for nothing against their sworn word."

"I have never heard the precise terms of that celebrated oath."

Antenor laughed. "Achates," he protested, "why so defensive with me? Surely a little more confidence might be expected, between friends?"

"You want plain speaking?"

"I ask it."

"Remember I am a plain man."

"So you would have people believe. I look below the surface."

"What do you find?"

"Shrewdness. Subtlety. And a fine sense of opportunity." Antenor still regarded me closely.

"You astonish me. I must examine myself to see if I, too, can discover these admirable qualities."

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"Achates, your verbal fencing is as adroit as your swordplay."

"You are a good judge. However, the reminder is timely."

"What do you mean?"

"Your simile recalls a maxim which I have made my fighting policy."

"Admit me to the secret I implore you."

"Very well. Go straight for your man; hit him hard, and hit him often."

"You should be a success as, say, a pirate."

"I could not compete with you, and your friends."

Antenor's eyes flashed a lightning-stroke of anger, which I blandly ignored.

"To abandon the defensive attitude which pains you so, let me point out that I have never known you to do a thing without a self-interested motive. You have sent for me, a soldier; flattered me, and spoken of confidence. Now, I am not fool enough to imagine that my career has been of the slightest interest to you until now, when the threat of war hangs over your moneybags. So I ask you, Antenor, what do you want me to do for you? And what is the bribe?"

Antenor blinked, and for a while was silent. Somehow he didn't seem so pleased with plain speaking. Innuendo was far more in his line. Well, it was all one to me.

"I will be open and frank with you," he said; a prospect that made me chuckle. "I want your views on this war, which is so much more your province than mine. Suppose, for instance, that you were leading the Achaians; what would you do?"

"That would depend on a number of things."

"Such as?"

"The numbers I could command. The number and qual-

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ity of the allies Troy could bring against me. The resources of food, water, and timber the country could provide while I besieged Troy — ”

“Why timber?”

“For engines of assault.”

“Of course. Go on!”

“And finally, whether I could command Ilion’s coast with my fleet.”

“For what purpose?”

“To maintain my supplies. And, incidentally, to keep Priam’s allies at home, so as to defend their own towns if I attacked them”

“Ah!” He frowned over this. “You think that’s what they will do?”

“Not at all. You asked me what I would do.”

“How fortunate for Troy that you are not fighting for Achaia!”

I shrugged. “It is possible that such an obvious plan has already occurred to Agamemnon.”

“You have no doubt that they will attack us, then?”

“I hear that preparations are already being made.”

“A great pity. Such a foolish, trifling quarrel.”

“They do not think so.”

“They will make a great nuisance of themselves before they realize that Troy is not to be taken — from without.”

“How else could it be taken?”

Antenor smiled, but made no reply. Presently, “You are very friendly with Anchises, are you not?”

“We tolerate each other.”

“How is Aeneas? I’ve not seen him since his marriage.”

“Very happy, I believe.”

“He must have made many friends among the Achaians

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in Thessaly. This war will grieve him, no doubt."

"It is possible."

"Dardania, of course, will fight?"

"If Anchises commands."

"Since the union of his house and the king's, I suppose he is more friendly with Priam?"

"I have only seen him twice. He has not seen Priam at all."

"Oh! I thought — but then, Anchises doesn't readily forgive slights and injuries, does he? You know, Achates, this war is going to be very expensive, whether we win or lose. Our allies must be kept; we shall take nothing from the Achaians by driving them into the sea; and our trade dues and markets will cease as soon as we are besieged."

"Very true. You had better sharpen your sword again; your gold won't be much good to you."

Antenor laughed perfunctorily. "It would save Ilion, if properly employed," he said. "I have offered to pay for an expedition to Egypt on Menelaus' behalf but neither Priam nor he will hear of it. I begged Priam to offer terms; even a heavy indemnity would be cheaper than war."

I shook my head. "Achaia's honor can't be bought," I said.

Antenor laughed contemptuously. "As men of the world, Achates, we both know better than that. If we prove beyond dispute that Helen is in Egypt — "

"They will reply that Paris is in Troy."

"If that young man had any spirit he'd go to Sparta and settle Menelaus, rather than see his country involved in a long and expensive war."

"Priam has taken up his quarrel in the name of Ilion. He can't forget Hesione, you know."

"That is an old wrong, and I have never heard that she was unhappy with Telamon. The point is, how are we go-

ing to pay our allies when the treasury is empty and there is no new revenue?"

"From the private fortunes of such wealthy men as you, Antenor!"

"Exactly! And we are to be impoverished for the sake of one man's pigheadedness!"

"You have my profound condolences," I assured him, gravely.

"Keep them until the time comes — if ever," he replied. "You know, Achates, sometimes I think we have the wrong man on the throne. With all his faults Anchises would never have let things come to this pass."

"It is as the gods decree."

"The will of the gods, my friend, is not always clear until some great event opens men's eyes," he said, slowly. "A man of your sense and experience would be invaluable to a vigorous and enterprising king. There is no height to which you might not rise."

"If I understand you rightly, it is a revolt you are proposing to me."

"I am only imagining what might be — for the good of our country."

"An unprofitable speculation, Antenor."

He smiled curiously. "Do you think so?" he said. "I have heard that Anchises has great plans for his son."

"I take your word for it. Aeneas, however, has ideas of his own about honor, and loyalty, and other trifling matters with which I will not weary a man of the world like you. I confess to being simple-minded enough to share his views."

"Your singleness of mind is a byword Achates," he observed. "Especially in matters of the heart."

"You are about to utter an indiscretion; take care!"

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"I? Not the least in the world. I was merely referring to your bachelorhood."

"Which has no relevance to the — wanderings of your imagination."

He laughed, and poured more wine. "They tell me that Paris is still deeply in love with Helen," he said. "He has deserted all his light-o'-loves; half Troy is brokenhearted. I wonder how long it will last. He has never been remarkable for constancy."

In spite of myself, "He has an astonishing gift, however, of inspiring lifelong devotion," I said.

Antenor's eyes gleamed, and I cursed myself. "Whom the gods love die young," he observed. "The astonishing career of that young man arouses grave fears for his continued existence."

"Having incurred the enmity of Hera and Athene, he should live to a ripe old age."

Antenor smiled. "That Troy should fall because of an idle dream!" he said. "Absurd, isn't it?"

"As absurd as the dream in which Troy fell," I agreed. "I wonder which did the greater harm?" Antenor glanced at me.

"We all have our dreams," he said. "My own particular nightmare is of the Achaians profaning the shrine on Mount Ida."

I sat very still.

He picked up his wine cup, and laughed. "Doubtless the goddess would survive," he said. "But you have a house there, not far from Cybele's sacred grove, I believe? And, of course, there are others — on the mountainside, and elsewhere. I trust you don't suffer from nightmares, Achates?"

"Not of that sort. Ida is fairly remote from Troy."

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"But it's where the timber grows," he said.

I was silent at that.

Antenor studied his fingernails. "Of course, if war were averted, I feel sure my nightmares would cease. But, as you rightly say, Priam is not the man to offer conciliation."

I stood up. "Antenor," I said, "we've talked a great deal of nonsense, and I've enjoyed your wine. You want me to join in a conspiracy to put Aeneas on the throne, offering me a high position under his rule. You think that the death of Paris would benefit me in some way — though some of your allusions I found obscure. You sent for me to sound me; I therefore feel none of the obligations of a guest. I am about to tell you that you are the dirtiest scoundrel in the city. You, your friends, and all they stand for are the curse of Ilion. Your precious moneybags are more to you than honor, decency, loyalty — all the things I reverence. And — God help her! — Ilion is in your hands. See to it, Antenor, that men like me, more used to weapons than words, are given no cause to seek you out, to demand of you what treachery sold Troy. For, by the beard of Zeus, Antenor, if that day comes, neither god nor man nor moneybag shall help you!"

* * * * *

Melodramatic in the extreme. But, as it happened, I meant it.

Chapter Eight

NEVER BEFORE IN MY RATHER LONELY LIFE HAD I felt so much the lack of a real friend. I came away from Antenor's feeling very uneasy. I didn't imagine I was the first to whom he'd spoken of rebellion; probably his moneyed friends, and even Anchises, were in it. Not until he was fairly sure of support among the nobility would he have approached a soldier; that surely marked the beginning of more active measures.

It was clear from his hints that he knew more than I liked about me, especially in relation to Oenone. Not that I had anything to hide; but I hated the idea that he had been prying into my affairs. By the way, I found out how he learned of Idomeneus' letter: a house-slave, a boy I thought I could trust, had somehow managed to get himself seduced by one of Antenor's girls — no doubt at that lecherous old rascal's instigation. I made Antenor a present of him without comment. Whether his reference to that letter had been a suggestion of blackmail I couldn't quite decide. It was beyond his conception, of course, that Idomeneus and I could honestly do our best on opposite sides without losing one jot of our friendship or respect for each other.

I wondered whether I should tell Hector about my talk with Antenor; as things turned out, I often wish now that I had. If I hadn't been quite so uncompromising to Antenor

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I might have learned a lot more. As it was, Antenor had no doubt covered his tracks, and it would be merely my word against his if I carried the matter to the prince.

I sighed for the counsel of Meri-mentu.

One thing was certain: when the spring came Oenone must leave her cottage on Ida. I told her so when I got back; to my relief she agreed. Creusa had just given birth to a son, and the two women meant to take shelter with Anchises. We fell to talking of little Iulus, and Oenone said a strange thing.

"When I first looked into his eyes," she told me, "a voice within me that I have learned to trust said that he was born to a throne."

I wonder what Antenor would have made of that?

* * * * *

Agamemnon proved his quality as a general by striking, not at Troy, where he was expected, but at Lydia, where he was not.

The people of the Caicos river, in southern Ilion, were hardy fighters, being of Hittite blood; and although they had no citadel comparable with Troy, they gave the Achaians such a trouncing that Agamemnon was glad enough to call a truce and draw off. That spring was stormy, and soon after the Achaians put to sea they ran into a heavy gale that played havoc with their undermanned ships. Instead of sailing to Ilion, therefore, Agamemnon wisely led his fleet back to Aulis.

When this became known in Troy you would have thought from the rejoicings that the war was won and over. It was even suggested that the rough weather had driven the Achaians out of their course, and that they'd actually mistaken

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the Cetaean country for Ilion. But Hector was not fooled. Telephus the king had fallen, and Teuthranus, his brother, sent to tell us that their losses had been grievously heavy; they intended, therefore, to stay at home and guard their coasts against another attack. So our most powerful ally had been knocked out of the war with one blow; and Hector admitted that Agamemnon had won the first round.

He wasted no more time. Our allies were summoned, and soon came pouring in, ready and eager to fight the eternal foe of our peninsula. But others, of the coast countries, refused to march until the Achaians were encamped before Troy. I for one didn't blame them. We had men enough from the inland cities and the Euxine shores to hold Troy; with the coasts well guarded we were less likely to be surprised by a swift march across country and an attack from an unexpected quarter. Agamemnon was quite capable of that.

To everybody's surprise Anchises held back the Dardans, ostensibly to guard the Ida ranges, where herds and timber would have been worth the Achaian's taking. As this made my own position uncertain I asked him what was in his mind.

He laughed at me. "Now that you are on the council I don't know how far I should rely on your discretion," he said.

"It's for you to say what I shall do. I'm there by no particular wish of my own. First of all things I am a Dardan."

"I believe you. Well, the fact is that Priam hasn't treated us too well. I'm still in official banishment. Everyone knows that he let Aeneas marry Creusa only for reasons of policy, and none of them has come near us since. He's annoyed because he allowed himself to be panicked into consenting to the marriage, and now he hates us more than ever. Well, let it be so. But if he wants my people he must ask for them

— very politely. I'm under no obligation to send them; and for the moment I choose to guard my own possessions."

"I see. I'd thought of staying in Troy, but —"

"My dear fellow, I wouldn't hold you back for the world. Your experience will be useful to Hector. If it helps to shorten the war that's what we all desire."

Aeneas was very incensed at his father's decision, but I mollified him by pointing out what help he could be in wiping out foraging parties. "They'll have to live on the country," I told him, "and if we are all in Troy, who's to stop them? Besides, you will be in command; much more exciting than just obeying orders."

He grinned. "You make it sound so attractive that I marvel how you can tear yourself away," he remarked. "I'll have to make the best of it, I suppose. Anyhow I can keep an eye on Creusa and the boy."

We heard that the rebuilding of the Achaian forces would take all winter, which gave us a chance to make some preparations of our own. At Aeneas' request I took some of his best men out on field exercises, and in a short time they achieved quite a respectable proficiency in ambushment and guerrilla tactics. I reported to Hector that they would prove to be a very useful auxiliary force and when he came out to see them for himself he was very impressed by a mock battle we arranged for him. So in the end Anchises' action produced more good than harm.

I liked Hector. He had shouldered his responsibility with a deep and earnest determination to do well. He was about as old as I, but Ilion had been at peace for so long that he'd had no fighting experience. It was his wish that placed me on the council. He had nominated Deiphobus second in command; he was younger than Paris, but, like the other princes,

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had been trained from his boyhood for war.

That was a difficult winter. Troy was packed with hordes of our allies, who had no fighting to do and no living to get. Racial rivalry at times led to brawls which spread like the Scamander in flood, often ending in killings and bitter feuds. We tried exercising them on the plain, but the experiment was not a success. They were an ill-disciplined lot, and it became clear that, speaking so many tongues and taking orders from none but their tribal chiefs, they could never be united in action. I began to be glad of the strength of Troy's walls.

In the earliest days of spring Oenone went with Creusa and little Iulus to Anchises' house near Dardanos. I stayed for a few days; once the war broke out I didn't know when I'd be able to see her again.

One evening, as I walked with her in the garden, she said, "I am going to ask you a hard thing, Achates."

"Nothing can be hard if you ask it," I told her.

She smiled, and went on, "It's not quite fair to you, either."

"You don't daunt me with these terrifying qualifications," I replied. "You are going to ask me to look after Alex for you."

She nodded. "Will you, Achates?"

"You might have known I would."

"I did. But I can't talk about him to anyone but you. And he is so brave, yet knows nothing of war. I am sometimes very anxious for him."

"Have no fear, I will do what I can."

"I have had a strange feeling lately, Achates. I feel as if my time of waiting will soon be ended; that he is coming back to me, and that we shall never be parted any more."

"I am glad, for your sake, Oenone. You have great faith in that inner voice, haven't you?"

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"As much as in you, Achates. Neither has ever failed me."

I smiled rather bitterly. "All I have done for you is to be the indirect cause of Alex leaving you, and then to offer you a love that you won't accept."

"Not quite that, Achates. I accept it, but can make no return. Believe me, I honor you, and your love makes me very proud."

"If you are ever convinced that Alex will never return, will you come to me, Oenone?"

She thought this over. "If I were ever quite sure I had lost him forever," she said, "I think I would. But do not build on it; I have already told you that I know he is soon coming back."

And with that I had to be content. Still, I suppose it was something.

* * * * *

We had decided to meet the Achaians with a small force of light cavalry, to harry their landing and do as much damage as possible at minimum cost. This force would be supported by a strong body of spears and archers, to cover their retreat and to prevent the Achaians marching straight on the city. There were some who advocated throwing our whole force into the first battle, to prevent even a landing. The objection to this was fairly obvious: all the ships wouldn't arrive together and we might easily be outflanked by those coming later and alert enough to seize their chance. If we were beaten, our morale would suffer a heavy blow, and Troy's defenses might be so depleted as to fall at the first assault.

We had plenty of time to make our dispositions after the Achaian ships were first sighted. It was a clear, blue morn-

ing, with lazy high veils of thin, white cloud. I was talking to Deiphobus on the wall when a thin, clear trumpet note sounded from the tower of the great megaron that crowned the city's height.

"The Achaians!"

From a few voices the cry swelled to a roar as townsfolk and garrison crowded the parapets, straining for a first glimpse of those wicket russet triangles far out at sea.

A grin, a touch on my shoulder, and Deiphobus went down to take command of the supports. Pielus would be getting my horse ready — I was riding with the five hundred — so I lingered a few more moments, thinking of many things.

"The great day arrives!"

Paris stood beside me, staring seaward. "I've never been so excited in my life," he went on. His voice shook slightly, and he turned to me. "I wish I were as cool about it as you, Achates."

"Why? A little fire in the blood is no bad thing. You are riding with us, aren't you?"

"Yes. I'm hoping to draw first blood. It's my quarrel, after all." He regarded his hand speculatively. "Shall I loose a straight shaft, I wonder, or should I do better with a spear?"

"When you're sighting your man you'll be ice. Take your bow; keep your sword ready; but leave your spear at home. We'd better get down."

Pielus was waiting with my horse. Before I could mount, Paris laid a hand on my arm.

"A long time ago, Achates, I made a fool of myself and said unforgivable things. Well, I've come to my senses. I ask your pardon."

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With my hand on the bridle, "I warn you that I love Oenone," I said, "and that I shall take her from you if I can. She loves you still, and thinks you'll go back to her."

"I doubt if I shall live through this war! If I can't have Helen I don't want to. For the rest, Achates, I ask only that you will be as faithful a friend to me as you've been to Oenone."

I swung myself into the saddle. "I will ride at your side — Paris . . ." I said, grinning down at him.

His face lit up, and he caught my hand. "Show me where honor lies, Achates," he said.

"Today, at the end of your sword," I replied.

A short time later we rode out, knee to knee, among the five hundred who were to strike the first blow for Troy.

* * * * *

We reached the cover of a small wood near the beach, some thirty stadia from the city, unseen by the Achaians, who, if they could make out anything at all, must have had their eyes on Deiphobus' force, drawn up some way inland. The approaching ships had spread north and south so as to have clear beaching-room; about two hundred of them, as I judged, each holding sixty men or so, sailing in an irregular line before a brisk breeze that chopped the sea into crisp wavelets. From the dip and flash of oars there must have been keen rivalry to reach the shore of Ilion first.

I looked about me with deep satisfaction. The bravest of Ilion waited silently among those trees, muttering and laughing low. The occasional jingle and swish of a restless horse was lost in the windy sigh of full-leaved branches and the ceaseless fret of sea waves on the sand.

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Paris had strung his bow and with arrow on string was peering at the advancing ships. Hector murmured an order, it was passed along: "The first shaft to Paris." Someone laughed, and comments were passed that brought a grin and a flush to his face.

At last one galley climbed the last breaker and ran up the flat, sandy shore; oars were shipped, the sail lowered, and fierce bearded faces appeared at the bow. Hector struck heels to his horse; and with a shout of defiance we poured in a thundering torrent toward the Achaian ship.

A fierce answering roar! A tall figure waved a spear, and leaped. He died before his feet touched the shore, Paris' shaft in his eye. The Achaians swarmed over the sides and prow. As they floundered in the knee-deep water our bows took terrible toll of them. We kept on the move, cutting with sword and axe those the arrows had spared. Not a man escaped of all that ship's company; but they died in honor.

For a time we met the ships one by one as they came in, but more and more reached land, and we were in some danger from the flanks. Hector therefore drew us off, and a great shout went up from the enemy; a volley of arrows followed us. Swiftly we turned, and in a long, open line bore down upon them with axe and sword.

Our rehearsal maneuver took them by surprise, for the attack was delivered with lightning speed. We went through them until our horses splashed into the water's edge; then back again, cutting and stabbing, and so away.

Paris was very happy. He had done some good work with his long sword, and won an approving word from Hector, who paid no idle compliments.

He grinned at me and his nostrils dilated. As we fell back on the footmen, "I can't think why I have never tried my

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hand at this pastime before," he said. "Behold my first wound!"

He held up his arm and laughed. A shallow spearcut ran from wrist to elbow, it had already stopped bleeding.

Hector, on his other side, snorted. "You wouldn't be here, but for Achates," he growled. "For the future don't let pre-occupation with a man on your left, blind you to what's going on at your right."

Paris laughed. "Achates can always be trusted to be in the right place at the right time," he remarked. But later, when we were within the gates, he came to me and offered thanks. It had been a small matter. He had turned to cut at an Achaian who had thrust up at him with a spear, failing to see the upraised sword of another on his right. I had just reached the man in time.

"Do you know," he said, thoughtfully, "if it had been me, and you'd stood between me and Helen, I think perhaps that sword might have just got home."

"Do you honestly?"

He considered, and grinned. "In the excitement of the moment, I shouldn't have thought about it," he admitted.

"Neither did I."

I left him to make what he liked of this. It was time he learned a bit of self-reliance.

* * * * *

The Achaians had clearly planned for a long campaign. They laid up their ships on stocks, and built a semi-circular earthwork terminating at both ends on the seashore. Within the shelter of this bastion they erected their tents. Horses and chariots were landed, and a strict watch kept. Agamem-

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non's strategy was good. His numbers wouldn't allow of a close siege; moreover he did not know the strength of the allies who had yet to come to our help. But from his counterwork he could harry our foragers; raid the countryside for his own supplies while keeping us on the alert for a grand assault; and cover his retreat if it ever became necessary. It could be held by a fairly small force, permitting him to send out marauding parties of some strength. The only thing he could not do was to prevent our allies joining forces with us, as he could have done had he more men.

We had no fear of an immediate attack on the city. Engines of assault required bulky materials that could not be brought by sea; they must be procured in Ilion and made into rams, ladders, counter-turrets and so forth; which would all take time.

On the fourth or fifth day, however, a fairly large body of Achaians approached the walls and shot a few arrows over the parapet, more by way of provocation than with any serious intention. Some of our people went out, and an undignified and promiscuous scrimmage was soon in progress. There were losses on both sides, but the result was inconclusive. More time seemed to be spent in plundering the dead than in fighting the living. I contemplated the sorry spectacle from the walls with some distaste. Not thus did we war in Egypt.

Desultory fighting of this sort took place almost daily after this, more and more being engaged on both sides, with varying fortune. Both sides began to feel the strain of this inconclusive skirmishing, and we in Troy, anxious for a settlement, hoped that our allies would soon be on the move.

Meanwhile, Agamemnon had sent out two parties. Aias the son of Telamon of Salamis had scoured the northlands

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as far as Abydos and had sent in a batch of horses. While to the south Achilles, whose father was that Peleus about whose marriage Paris had dreamed, had sailed south. Within a month or two he held the islands of Tenedos and Lesbos; went south to Cilicia and sacked Thebes, where Andromache's father Eetion with his seven sons died fighting; took Antandros, and made a swift raid inland to round up the herds on Ida. Here, however, he ran into Aeneas and the trained Dardan guerillas, who ambushed him neatly and turned him eastward with a much depleted force. After a stout resistance Lyrnessos fell to him; this was a small, pleasant, but relatively unimportant town. The sequel to its taking, however, almost ruined the Achaian cause as I shall presently show.

After some further operations in the south Achilles returned in triumph with a large amount of plunder: men for the slave markets abroad, women for more immediate purposes in the Achaian camp, and corn and cattle in abundance.

Things began to look serious. We had been expecting the Cilicians daily; but, like the Cetaeans, they were out of the war — for a time, at any rate. Food was becoming short, for while small foraging parties could come and go fairly freely, a large force such as was required to supply the city's needs was immediately challenged. The Achaians were in a position from which we couldn't dislodge them with the forces we commanded; one, moreover, which they could hold indefinitely, with their new supplies.

Yet the advantage could not be said to lie with them, for Troy was still unassailed and impregnable. And so the summer dragged on.

We were talking over these matters one evening on the wall, looking out over the plain toward the enemy position.

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"It's so damned inconclusive," Deiphobus said. "There's no reason why it shouldn't last forever, at this rate."

"That's what Antenor is grumbling about," said Polites, with a chuckle. This boy led the chariots, and was immensely popular. "The old man is raging. 'All this dusting of each others' hides is getting us nowhere,' he said to me. 'Why don't you do something?' I asked him where he'd be if we went out in full force and they smashed us."

"Antenor would be quite unmoved," Paris remarked. "I don't like the way he talks. He doesn't care who wins; he's more friendly with the Achaians than I care about. It wouldn't surprise me if he made some arrangement with Diomedes and Odysseus when they stayed with him."

"There are still too many people in Troy who think it possible, even now, to buy the Achaians off," Polites observed. "One man even suggested letting Menelaus carry out a house-to-house search, to convince himself that Helen isn't here. What the fools won't realize is that by now Helen is a side issue; they tell me Menelaus is quite happy with a girl they brought him from Lesbos."

"If only women could be relied upon!" Deiphobus said. "We might hope for a few useful assassinations. But they are so easily tamed. They don't think nationally."

Exactly how they did think was discussed with some freedom, and the debate degenerated somewhat in tone.

At last Polites said with a grin, "There's one exception. If they caught our Polyxena —"

This was received with laughter. The king's youngest daughter was a damsel of quite startling loveliness and vivacity; and completely heartless. Her eternal regret was that she hadn't been born a boy; although, as Paris often gravely assured her, she'd be glad of it one day. At the

moment she was full of a project she'd conceived of forming a corps of women archers, led, naturally, by herself, to take their place on the walls among the men. She had the spirit of an Amazon — in the existence of whom, by the way, she firmly believed — and saw herself as a second, and probably superior, Hippolyte; for the legendary queen had been destroyed by love, a sentiment that Polyxena, with all the assurance of her sixteen years, regarded with scorn. In fact, the Amazons were a race of beardless men inhabiting a remote part on the south-eastern coasts of the Euxine, beyond Paphlagonia. They were warlike enough, but had other less admirable propensities to which the legend might readily be traced. But this fact we didn't tell Polyxena.

Priam wouldn't hear of his daughter's proposal, but Polites at first pretended to take it seriously. It was not until he made it clear that he'd wilfully misunderstood her that the trouble started. His references to the devastation to be expected in the hearts of the Achaians from the bright eyes of her friends, and the Eros-brows of their lips, so incensed her that she chased him from the palace with a small hunting-spear. For a day or two he preferred to stand.

I don't know who would have been more deserving of sympathy, a ravisher or a husband. But she was an amusing child.

Chapter Nine

IT IS NOT MY INTENTION TO SET DOWN THE TEDIOUS DETAILS of that most uninteresting war. This narrative is primarily concerned with my own story, and those I knew and loved when I was young. Considered as a war the siege of Troy, one of many campaigns in which I have taken part, before and since, was remarkable to me only in the profound effect it had on my subsequent life.

In these later days, however, I have heard so many distortions and exaggerations of the tale, chiefly from Achaian minstrels, that for the sake of truth I feel bound to record some of its leading incidents, bearing as they do on the final outcome which more intimately concerned me.

It was a squalid squabble with a sordid motive, and few on either side gained much honor from it. As in every war, there were brave deeds and heroic sacrifices. But there was much more of savagery, senseless, ferocious cruelty and downright meanness of spirit, which stained the bright names that fair fighting might have honored.

The peculiar genius of the Achaians for self-aggrandizement has led them to magnify, out of all proportion, the fine things their people did. Any success on our part was attributed to the active aid of interested deities, a preposterous assumption, not limited, by the way, to this particular campaign.

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In straight fight, I admit freely, some of their best had no equal. It was always a pleasure to meet Achilles, who, though hotheaded and vainglorious, was a brave man and skilful with his weapons. Diomedes, Odysseus, Ajax and Agamemnon were also worth going far to seek; and it was with some satisfaction that I cut the fifth notch on the haft of my axe — a square-bladed weapon with a wicked spike at the back, which I had brought from Egypt.

Paris watched me curiously. "What are they for?" he asked.

I laughed. "Very minor satisfactions. Men with whom I have been at some pains to exchange a few handstrokes."

"Who are they?"

I told him; he stared rather. "Do you mean that you deliberately go after them?"

"Yes. In all humility, of course. And so far without much result."

He began to laugh. "I find myself in a continual state of astonishment at still being alive after a good day's fighting, without looking for trouble," he observed with feeling.

I looked up at him. "Shall I turn your head if I tell you that you are doing rather well?" I said. "You are competent to meet Menelaus."

"I've had it in mind for some time. What are my chances Achates?"

"About even. He's good, but not in the first class. I don't need to emphasize the heart you'd give our people if you gave him a beating."

"I've been rather avoiding him, for the opposite reason."

"Wisely. But you have enough experience now to take him on. What's all that shouting?"

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Crowds were hurrying to the Scaean Gate. "It's the Lycians," a soldier told us. "They've just arrived." We watched them pouring in: hundreds of dark, sturdy fighting men under their king, Glaucus, and his companion-chief Sarpedon, a grave, kindly man with gentle manners, who reminded me of Meri-mentu. I took to Glaucus at once; he was a jovial black-bearded giant, tolerant and uncomplicated, but terrific in battle. He hadn't been in Troy before and I showed him the city; by the time we'd finished it was dark and we sat on the wall to enjoy the coolness.

"What do you think of the war?" he asked me. "Our chances, and so forth?"

"Fair. Trying to give orders in a dozen different languages is our biggest difficulty; we can't organize. As soon as they see the Achaians, they simply leap on them, and fight until they drive them back to the earthworks, or until we're chased back to the city."

Glaucus grinned. "That's the style of fighting I'm used to," he remarked. "There's a lot to be said for it. Except being chased, we must stop that."

"Perhaps we shall, now that your people are with us. Are they looking forward to a fight?"

"As a means to an end. They're even more anxious to lay their hands on some loot."

"They won't find much in the Achaian camp, it's mostly shipped to Lemnos as it's brought in. They've made a market there; the king buys slaves to sell to the Phoenicians, and sells all sorts of supplies — including women — to the Achaians at a terrific profit. We've a long account to settle with that miserable little huckster when we've kicked the Achaians out of Ilion."

Glaucus nodded.

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An idea struck me. "You've brought some cattle in with you, haven't you?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Have you some good drovers?"

"The best you'll find."

"I've heard of their reputation. They're said to be the biggest cattle thieves on the peninsula."

His eyes twinkled. "Quality before quantity. Say the most accomplished. What's in your mind?"

"We might signalize your arrival by annoying the Achaeans, and giving your beasts some company."

Glaucus roared, and slapped his thigh. "I see I shall enjoy knowing you, Achates," he said.

Hector was agreeable. "While you're about it, if you can do so without too much risk, bring in a prisoner or two," he said. "There are rumors of trouble in the camp, and I want to know what it's about."

I said I'd do what I could and went with Pielus to the Scaean Gate, where Glaucus waited with a score or so of fighting herdsmen; and a villainous-looking crew they were. We went on foot, lightly armed, and came cautiously to a gate in the earthwork leading directly into the cattle corral. Usually it was well guarded, for obvious reasons, and we crept forward silently, Glaucus, Pielus and I, to deal with the watchers, leaving the herdsmen to await the opening of the gate.

To our surprise, there were no guards at all. We hunted about suspiciously, fearing a trap. Glaucus and I strained our eyes through the darkness as Pielus quietly set the gate wide, but no challenge alarmed us, nor was there any sign of life.

Quickly the Lycian drovers aroused the lethargic cattle —

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no easy task — with methods of their own. We could have emptied the corral with a few more drovers, as it was the number herded out on to the plain would be very welcome in Troy.

As Pielus closed the gate, "This is too easy," I murmured to Glaucus. "Hector said there was trouble somewhere, it looks as if he was right. I'd like to know more about it."

Glaucus looked up at the stars. "The night's still young," he said. "Let's see what there is to be seen."

Though within the earthwork, we were outside the encampment proper. As we approached the quiet tents a raucous voice was raised in bibulous song and a swaying figure came toward us, bearing a wine bottle.

I laid a hand on Glaucus' arm and went forward. "Why aren't the cattle guarded?" I demanded sternly. A shot at a venture that found its mark.

"Let Agamemnon look after his own incarnadined cattle," the man said, defiantly. "I'm a Myrmidon, I am, and from now on we're out of the war. Treating Achilles like that —" Then, with wakening suspicion, "Who are you, that you don't know that?"

"Ilians," I said, and dropped him with a blow to the point of the chin.

Glaucus picked him up and slung him over a shoulder. "Let's get back," he said; and strode swiftly through the darkness.

"There's not all that hurry," I protested. "We can gag him before he comes round."

"No hurry?" Glaucus snorted. "I want to send my fellows back for the rest, while the going's good!"

Patchy white clouds were being driven before a brisk breeze across the newly risen moon as we hurried back to

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the city. Near the Scaean Gate I caught a sudden glitter to the southeast: a flash, that twinkled, went out, and winked again. I sent Glaucus in with our precious prisoner — now recovered and swearing ferociously — while Pielus and I went forward. We heard a jingle and stamp of hooves; as the moon emerged I saw two pure white horses harnessed to a stationary chariot from which a plumed warrior peered distrustfully at us. Behind him stood rank after rank of armed men, and I cried out as I recognized their dress.

"Aeneas!" I shouted. "I am Achates!"

Anchises was with him, and Creusa, and Iulus, but not, as I'd wildly hoped, Oenone. He said little until we were in the city and his men accommodated.

Over a meal he explained his unexpected arrival. "You people have eaten up all the cattle on Ida," he said, with a grin. "There's not much left to guard; and since we ambushed Achilles my men have been thirsting for blood. In the end I told my father I was for Troy, if I went alone; I repeated what Achilles said about him and my mother," he added, "after which he gave no trouble. So here we are. Tell me all about yourself, I'm glad to see you unhurt."

"Before that, what's become of Oenone?"

His face clouded. "She's gone back to the mountains," he said. "I did all I could to persuade her to come with us, but I couldn't compel her. She said she'd be safe enough; it's true the Achaians don't go that way since we trounced them; and — she carries a knife, Achates. She told me you gave it her."

I nodded. I remembered very well the Osiris hilt, upon the face of which the Egyptian craftsman had so skilfully expressed the mild benignity of the gentle god. Little as I liked the idea of her being alone in that cottage, I had to

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admit she was her own mistress; and probably safer where she'd have some warning of a hostile approach than in a town, where she'd be at the mercy of a sacker. I tried not to feel uneasy, and resolved to see her as soon as I could conveniently get away from Troy.

* * * * *

The prisoner we had brought in gave us some astonishing news. Apparently that very day there had been a violent quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles, resulting in the withdrawal of the latter from all further part in the war. As usual, it was about a woman.

In the sack of Lyrnessos Achilles had brought back a girl named Chryseis, of whom Agamemnon became passionately enamored. Her father was a priest of Apollo in Lyrnessos. When Agamemnon refused to give up the girl, he cursed the camp in the name of the god, and a pestilence broke out (though from the frightful smell that had greeted us that night the hypothetical intervention of the god seemed a slight redundancy) which he declared would only cease with the return of Chryseis. By this time Agamemnon, somewhat dampened by the tears of the girl, who loathed him more every day, had been attracted to another, one Briseis, a merry damsel whom Achilles, with some perception, had kept for himself. He therefore gladly seized the chance of combining apparent piety with real expedience; sent Chryseis home, and told Achilles to send Briseis to his tent.

This highhanded proceeding was the culmination of a jealousy between the two men that had existed since Aulis. Achilles was not the man to accept it with philosophy. He called the deities to witness how he had been dishonored;

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declared himself absolved from the oath of confederacy; and retired in high dudgeon to his tent, from which he did not intend to emerge until his ships were ready to sail for home.

All this made capital hearing for us. The defection of such a notable leader was sure to spread despondency among the Achaians whose gloom would not be dissipated when they discovered the loss of their cattle. The addition of the large Dardanian and Lycian contingents to our forces, and this depletion of the besiegers, already thinned and weakened by the plague, made our prospects look brighter than ever before.

Hector ordered a grand assault for the next morning.

* * * * *

I pause here, without apology, to invite your participation in a wholehearted and comprehensive curse on one Pandarus, an archer, who happily for him died the next day. Cursed may he be in death, in future life, in death again; cursed in daylight and darkness, in sleep and in waking. May the waters of Lethe be withheld from him; the fires of Tartarus torment him eternally; the Elysian gates close against him for ever. Wherever his shivering shade may fly, may my curse reach out and blast him utterly. Cursed be the hut in Lycia which gave him birth; cursed the Ilian earth in which he lies. Vow breaker; ruin of Troy; breaker of my life; cursed be his name for evermore!

* * * * *

We marched at daybreak. Chariots and cavalry cantered forward while spears and bowmen made a supporting line of great length and depth. My heart glowed as I looked

along those eager ranks. Nothing, I felt sure, could stop them from driving the Achaians into the sea and destroying them utterly. Tomorrow I should be with Oenone, never to leave her again.

Like the gallant foemen they were the Achaians poured out to meet us. For a while the two forces faced each other, leaders marshalling their tribes, haranguing them after the custom. Eagerly we scanned the enemy's ranks: our prisoner had spoken truly — the Myrmidons were not there.

Suddenly, I saw a white horse leap forward. Paris, his face set, galloped along the Achaian line, scrutinizing the suspicious chiefs. I divined his purpose and, with a word to Hector, spurred after him. I reached him as he reined his horse before the Spartans.

"Ha, Menelaus!" he shouted. "Still looking for your wife? Come out and fight for her!"

As a challenge it probably lacked dignity, but it served its purpose. White with fury Menelaus ran forward, brandishing a spear. Paris laughed, dismounted, and threw the reins to me. He was as cool and steady as on the day of the games, so long ago.

Before they could come to blows, however, Hector had reached us. Simultaneously Agamemnon appeared, shouting angrily to his brother. For a moment the two generals eyed each other doubtfully. Then, with no good grace, Agamemnon lifted a hand in salute.

The two armies watched with interest this first meeting except in arms. They spoke together for the first time. Paris was chafing with indignation.

"Why must they come and spoil it?" he demanded furiously. "I had him mad. It would have been all over by now, if —"

"Steady, Paris!" I warned him. "There's more hangs on this today than just your personal quarrel. Look at them — and look at us! Agamemnon's seen it, too; he's ready to parley."

Presently Hector and Agamemnon beckoned the chiefs. When they were assembled:

"Trojans and Achaians," Hector said, in his deep, purposeful voice, "lay down your arms. Today my brother Paris will meet Menelaus in single fight. Your general has agreed that, should Menelaus die, you will withdraw from Ilion and leave us in peace, having no further claims upon us. Should Paris fall, Troy will give Menelaus all reasonable satisfaction. Do you agree?"

An unhesitating shout of approval arose from both sides. Menelaus stepped forward.

"I accept the challenge," he said. "Achaia has no further quarrel with Ilion than lies between this man and me. Too many lives have already been wasted in my cause; let today see its end."

While his speech was being cheered —

"And they're getting out of it mighty cheaply," Glaucus remarked in my ear. "Whatever happens we shan't have the satisfaction of pushing them into the sea."

"Agamemnon's an opportunist of some note," I replied. "I salute him."

Paris had raised his hand. "For the wrongs I have done to you, Menelaus," he said, firmly, "I have only one excuse: I love Helen. More than the honor I have thrown away; more than life, which I am ready to lose. I repeat solemnly before you all — with what may be almost my last breath — Helen is not here, she is in Egypt. I could wish we might have been friends, Menelaus; but as you stand between me

and Helen, by the beard of Zeus! this day I shall do my best to kill you, or never see her face again. Let no man come between us, or he dies!"

I think I admired Paris more than ever in his life. Even the Achaians nodded their approval. Menelaus regarded him intently, but made no reply.

Priam, hastily summoned from Troy, made due sacrifice, binding both sides to a truce and confirming in solemn vows the undertaking of the generals. In particular, it was enjoined that the decision of the combat should be accepted without reservation, and that no interruption or participation should be attempted by Trojan or Achaian, on peril of life, honor and soul. Arms were laid aside, a ring was measured, and the two armies jostled for places.

The duel was to be with spears, lots being drawn for the first cast. Should both survive, there was no further rule in the matter of weapons or manner of fighting. Hector drew the lots from a helmet; a great shout went up as he pointed to Paris, who turned to me with an exclamation of triumph.

"Don't be in a hurry to throw," I advised him. "Feint at his stomach. When he lowers his shield, go for his neck. You'll never put it through his cuirass."

Paris nodded. His eyes were dancing. "The end of it all!" he murmured. "Oh, Achates, you don't know how glad I am."

He pressed my hand; with a last smile he leaped eagerly into the ring. There was a lump in my throat as I watched him go.

"How much on Paris?" said Glaucus, at my shoulder.

"If he wins, I shan't need your money. If he loses, you won't have any to pay me with."

"In that case you shall come and live with me in Lycia,"

he said, with a low, rumbling laugh, "where we have plenty of wine, women and war."

"What more could heart of man desire?" I murmured. "Here comes Menelaus."

The confusion of voices was hushed as the two champions faced each other. Slowly they circled, Paris with spear upraised, Menelaus crouched behind his brass-mounted shield, keeping a wary distance. Paris was smiling grimly; the eyes of the Spartan king watched him unwinkingly, glaring defiance.

A swift feint, a lightning lunge. Just in time Menelaus tipped the flying lance with the edge of his shield; it grazed his neck and flew on.

"Too slow in the real cast," Glaucus muttered. "Let's hope he has a good shield."

Almost as he spoke Menelaus leaped forward and threw. The spear penetrated Paris' shield; he arched his body back, and the head clinked evilly against the armor at his waist. Before he could straighten Menelaus was upon him with upraised sword, which he brought clashing down on the back of the plumed helmet. Paris lurched and fell forward, but the sword shivered in Menelaus' hand; too slight for such a blow.

Paris was still dizzy from the shock. Amid a roar of triumph from the Achaians Menelaus wound the horsehair plume in his fingers and felt for his knife. My heart was hammering painfully in my throat; Glaucus' fingers were like steel upon my arm . . .

"God of battles, he's saved!" Glaucus roared. Tugging him toward the Achaian line, Menelaus had broken the fastenings of Paris' helmet. For a moment he stared in consternation. Paris, shaking his head and blinking, let out a

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sudden yell of triumph and drew his sword.

Never was such a reversal of fortune; for the first time Menelaus began to fear. He looked about him desperately as, armed only with a short knife, he gave ground before his grim, unsmiling adversary. I found myself shouting hoarsely. Glaucus was thumping my back, and pandemonium was loose among the Ilians as Paris raised his sword.

"It's all over!" Glaucus was bellowing. "We've won!"

And then a bow thrummed, an arrow whistled from among the Lycian archers. Menelaus tumbled forward, blood spurt-
ing down his thighs, a feathered shaft protruding from his stomach.

Paris paused, and lowered his sword uncertainly. After a moment of stupefied silence the Achaians, with a thunderous bellow of fury, leaped for their weapons. And the two armies, frantic at the breaking of a truce that should by now have seen the end of the war, fell upon each other with a savage, desperate ferocity the like of which had never been seen before on the Ilian plain.

We beat them back to the earthwork, but had no heart for more. Wearily we returned to Troy, dispirited, dejected, foresworn.

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Whether it was done for cupidity — for the end of the war would have brought no profit to the Lycian — or merely from excess of excitement, we shall never know; for Pandarus died in the battle.

But when all is told perhaps you will join with me in cursing him for evermore.

Chapter Ten

HECTOR SENT A HERALD NEXT DAY TO AGAMEMNON, strongly deploring the action that had broken the truce; inquiring courteously after Menelaus' hurt, and re-affirming Troy's willingness to abide by the terms of the undertaking should he recover and feel disposed to renew the combat with Paris.

It was clear from Agamemnon's reply, however, that we had lost all chance of a speedy end to the war without further fighting. While accepting our disclaimer, he held us responsible for the breaking of a solemn oath. Menelaus was badly hurt, though not in serious danger, and declined to meet Paris again. It was the intention to fight on to a finish.

There was nothing to do but accept the unhappy consequence. It seemed to me that Agamemnon's decision was probably influenced by our failure, in the battle after the duel, to do more than chase the Achaians back to their earth-work. It was a great pity we had not followed them inside and finished them off. The Achaians were now in better heart in consciousness of rectitude. Our people, by the same token, were correspondingly depressed. It was openly said that the gods would fight against us — though the prospect left me, for one, unmoved. A solemn procession of matrons went to the temple of Athene to implore the aid of that mar-

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tial goddess in our cause. Propitiatory rites were performed, and the Palladium duly decorated and anointed. This celebrated object was a statue of Athene, said to have fallen from Olympus in the ancient days; if so, Hephaestus was a poor craftsman, for it was crude to a degree; but, perhaps from civic pride, its authenticity had never been questioned.

From Antenor's remarks at the council which met to receive Agamemnon's reply it seemed that he put little faith in either his wife's ministrations or the goddess' complaisance; for he strongly advocated arranging a truce for further parleys, with an offer of an indemnity as a basis for negotiation. He voiced a large body of opinion. Having seen peace so near, the townsfolk were resolved to do all possible to secure it, before the renewal of hostilities put an end to their hopes. Hector waited patiently while a further representation was made to the Achaians and refused. Then we started fighting again.

This time Hector adopted different tactics. He put it to us that the Achaian rank and file wished as heartily as we to end the war before winter set in; they had shown that clearly in their approval of the terms of the duel, and must be regretting that a decision had not been reached. Winter would bear on them more heavily than on us; our strength now made it possible to convoy grain and cattle from inland, whereas they would find it increasingly hard to obtain supplies. Given long enough, the disaffection started by Achilles would spread to such an extent that they would voluntarily withdraw.

His reading of the situation turned out to be sound. The righteous indignation of the Achaians was soon forgotten in hunger and hardship as the weather broke and fierce storms broke bitterly over the camp. We contented ourselves with

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sorties and skirmishes, never in very great force, and for the first time besiegers became besieged. All was going well, until Odysseus came back from Achaia with fresh levies, raised after the gathering of the harvest. From that day our fortunes seemed to change.

There is a strain of mysticism in the Teucrian blood which came out in Cassandra in childhood. Helenus had it in considerable strength; and one of his prophecies, implicitly believed by the Trojans, was that while we held the Palladium, Troy could not fall. So Odysseus, helped by Diomedes, promptly stole it. The loss was bad enough, that all unknowingly I had witnessed the theft was exasperating to a degree.

Glaucus, Sarpedon and I had been spending an evening with Paris and Aeneas. Creusa, Polyxena and some of their bright-eyed friends had joined us, and we'd kept it going pretty late. The men had been telling tales of adventure, each monstrous story being capped in all gravity by another more preposterous, for the sheer delight of seeing Polyxena's expressions of horror and envy. Sarpedon alone told no tales, but listened, unmoved and unremarking, with his charming half-smile, while Glaucus rolled out lies enough for the two.

We were weak with laughter when we left for my house, and perhaps we'd been drinking rather freely, after the girls had gone to bed. However that may be, when we ran across Antenor in the silent moonlit street that sloped down to the western gate I hailed him cheerfully by name. Close behind him two men were carrying a covered figure on a bier. Antenor placed himself between them and us, and they hurried on in the shadows as he stopped to speak.

"What mischief are you up to now, Antenor?" I de-

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manded. "Burying the body? Tell me, did you poison him, or merely stab him in the back?"

Glaucus came out with some quite unrecordable theory of his own.

Antenor blenched, and glanced about him furtively. "One of my slaves," he explained.

I roared with laughter. "The boy I gave you?" I asked. "I thought he wouldn't last long in the same house as that young Ate of yours."

"You'd better go home, Achates. You've had a merry evening. Mine, alas! has been quite the reverse. I must go and see after the poor young fellow."

"Such solicitude for a slave — at this time of night, and all alone, too — at your age! It shall be remembered to your eternal credit, Antenor."

He stared at me with curious intensity. "You'll have forgotten all about it, by morning," he said.

Oddly enough, he was quite right. And I wasn't very drunk, either.

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"I want to be certain the Achaians aren't meaning to go home, before we attack in force again," Hector said. "They were on the point of it, I'm convinced. But Odysseus has been talking to them, and now I'm not so sure. Rhesus is bringing a fresh supply of chariot horses from Thrace; by the time he's here we'll know. I've sent a youngster Polites recommended to find out what he can. He should be back before dawn."

But the boy Dolon never came back. And Rhesus was ambushed and killed with most of his men. The horses we

had been waiting for went to the Achaian camp.

The news came to us within an hour of the discovery that the Palladium had disappeared.

"Very well," said Hector. "It's clear that they mean to stay. If they aren't going to use their ships, we'll go and burn them. We'll get into the earthwork from both flanks, go for one of the gates and let the footmen in, and play hell generally. They'll be sick of Ilion before we've done, and glad to get out at any price."

A little before dawn we were on the beaches, a regiment of cavalry a few stadia from each flank of the earthwork. We cautiously worked around the seaward ends — what sentries there were had been dealt with — and waited in small groups between the dark, silent drawn-up ships for the day. So silently had the dispositions been made that we took the Achaians completely by surprise. We fired the ships, and charged the tents. A small wedge made for the gates, and our footmen poured in. The Achaians had no chance to organize a resistance, their losses that day were frightful. We cut and thrust and hacked until we couldn't raise our arms. Then Hector drew us off while the footmen, under the protection of a strong rearguard, destroyed the gate and broke down the earthwork.

"That pays for Rhesus," Hector remarked, with satisfaction.

We looked back; a thick screen of smoke hung over the blazing ships, and the tents lay flat and ruined. All save those of the Myrmidons, which we'd been careful to spare — we had even left them their ships.

The horses of Rhesus came back with us.

"Won't Agamemnon be pleased!" Paris remarked, jubilantly. "It's going to rain hard tonight, too. I wonder if

Achilles will offer him a corner of his tent? He might even take Briseis."

From that time on we gave the Achaians no peace. As fast as they restored their earthwork we knocked it down again. Daily our people became more confident as success followed success. The effects of the two blows Odysseus had dealt us wore off, and we quite forgot the dishonored oath. The Achaian prisoners were unanimous in their declarations of apathy and unrest among the ranks. Had it not been for the augurs, who continually promised success, and the tenacity of the kings, none of whom would incur the odium of being first to break away from the confederacy, the war might have ended then.

But, alas, it didn't.

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The Cetaeans had recovered from the initial blow dealt them by Agamemnon the previous spring, and after the harvest was in a fairly large body of them, led by Eurypylus the son of their dead king Telephus, arrived in Troy.

They flung themselves into the fighting with all the alacrity of hate and vengeance. Eurypylus himself killed Machaon, the surgeon son of celebrated Aesculapius. This was a pity, in many ways. Machaon was no very great fighting man, and the loss of such a brilliant mind was to be deplored, whatever his nationality. He should never have been in the battle. Also, Achilles admired him greatly . . .

A day or so after this event we stormed the Achaian stronghold in some force, meaning to drive them from it if we could, so as to harry and disperse them on the plain. We had by this time avoided the Mymidon tents as a matter of course, not even bothering to protect our flank or rear,

whichever was toward them; and from this tacit assumption of their neutrality disaster sprang.

Without warning, at the height of the battle, swarms of Myrmidons poured out and fell upon us. Utterly confounded, we turned to face them, but they were too many and quite fresh. We had to withdraw, to the very gates of the city. The famous armor of Achilles was known to us all, a beacon of war, to which Hector cut his way resolutely, with Aeneas, Paris, Glaucus, Sarpedon and me at his heels. But the tall figure held us off, and Sarpedon fell, mortally wounded. There was the usual disgusting scrimmage for his poor body, and Glaucus and I led a charge of Lycians to recover it from the jackal hands that were stripping it of its armor. By the time we had regained it, Hector had killed his man. But to our surprise and disappointment the raising of the helmet disclosed the face of Patroclus, Achilles' cousin and intimate — very intimate — friend.

"I thought he was easy, for Achilles," Hector growled, though he was by no means unscathed. "Let's see if we can tempt the hero out. I'm going to finish this war, and if Achilles stands in my way he must take the consequence."

Quickly, with our help, he changed his armor for that taken from the dead Patroclus, and returned to the field. The death of their leader had shaken the Myrmidons badly, and the other Achaians were exhausted from hunger and fatigue. Polites led a charge of chariots, kept in permanent reserve within the city for just such an emergency as this. Very soon we were storming against the broken defenses of the coastal stronghold.

For a while there was a lull. We drew up our men for a final attack, while the Achaians surveyed us defiantly but with gloom from their position. Hector walked rather osten-

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tatiously, in full view of everybody, wearing Achilles' armor, twirling his spear and looking in the direction of the Myrmidon tents. There was a sudden commotion within the wall, and Achilles, his face contorted with grief and fury, leaped upon the parapet and started mouthing curses, insults and defiance. He seemed quite out of his mind, and gestured like a maniac.

How it happened I can't conceive but a wave of superstitious terror seemed suddenly to surge through our army. They gave back in awe before that demented, screeching, gesticulating figure that foamed and gibbered from the broken earthwork. Slowly at first, but faster as the panic spread, they moved out of earshot of that anguished, accursed voice.

Quick to seize his chance — he was a fine general — Agamemnon made a sortie. The retreat became a flight, the flight a rout. He drove a wedge deep into our disordered ranks; half he turned to the north, where they became bogged in the estuary marshlands; the rest poured back into the city, shamed and crestfallen. Vainly we tried to rally them, to turn the sweeping tide; but they were beyond reason, adjuration or downright cursing. The Achaians surged jubilantly about the walls, shouting insults. We poured arrows into them, but such was their elation that they ignored them, though numbers fell. Sick at heart I stood with Paris and Deiphobus; we each shot away several quivers, apparently without the slightest effect.

Glaucus came up to me. "I've got my men at the northern gate," he said. "Hector and Aeneas are still out. When they come in from the marshes I'm going to make them a passage through this rubbish outside. Coming?"

I nodded eagerly; gave Pielus my bow and took my axe. "Poor old Sarpedon!" Glaucus growled huskily, as we

went down. "I'm glad we've got him. Do you know, he hated fighting . . . I'll feel strange without him, after all these years."

I couldn't find anything to say. He was too deeply moved for commonplaces. In the presence of a great grief even sympathy is silent. There was a not unwelcome diversion: a shout from the walls announced the return of our remaining forces.

"We'll give Sarpedon a good following," Glaucus muttered between set teeth. "Open the gates—wide!" he roared. "Lycia, follow me!"

We bore the Achaians before us like storm-wrack on the crest of a running wave. A wide space was cleared as we wedged east and west, closing again behind the last exhausted stragglers as we fought off the equally weary Achaians who followed them. My axe drank deep that day; but Glaucus was fighting mad. For every man I laid out he swept away three. He stormed and roared and hewed like a Titan of primeval days until the gates closed behind us. Then he grinned at me.

"I feel a little — a very little — better, now," he panted. "Let's go up on the gate and see if we've left any alive."

Polites was there, white with pain from a wound in his shoulder. Aeneas, happily unhurt, though cut and bleeding from a score of scratches. Deiphobus and Paris had fewer than a dozen arrows left between them. They could hardly draw for weariness.

"How did you get on?" I asked Aeneas. He shrugged.

"We could do nothing; they had it all their own way. We escaped by paths over the marshes, where they dared not follow. But their chariots met us at the ford. We fought our way across, although they tried to head us northward.

Hector did wonders. If it hadn't been for him we'd have been scattered all over the country. Even so it was pretty fearful; they were four to one, and although the panic had gone — ”

A sudden shout from the wall. Deiphobus looked down.

“Hector!” he yelled. “Come back, you fool!” Turning, he flung a curse at the captain of the gate. “Open!” he shouted. “Hector is still outside!”

We ran to the parapet. The Achaians were moving slowly back to their camp, and were beyond farthest bowshot. But Hector, alone and carrying a spingle spear, was going after them purposefully. He turned at his brother's frenzied roar, and waved.

“I'm going after Achilles,” he shouted. “I couldn't find him at the ford. Nobody's to leave Troy; he's my meat. You can come out and pick him up when it's over.”

He had been seen. The Achaians turned and came running back. A single chariot burst from them in a cloud of dust; from it Achilles leaped and, waving a spear, ran toward Hector. Paris restrung his bow.

“Not that way, you fool,” snapped Deiphobus. “Hector would never forgive you.”

“That mad dog shan't go back alive, whatever happens,” Paris muttered. But he didn't draw an arrow.

Priam, Hecuba, and Antenor were watching from the tower above the Scaean gate. All Troy yelled encouragement as the two men met. They circled warily, shields advanced, spears raised. Achilles threw first. Hector leaned aside; the lance flashed over his shoulder. While Achilles recovered, he threw his own.

The day's fighting must have told on even Hector's great strength, or the spear had been met by the metal boss of

Achilles' shield; for it bounced off, spinning, and fell harmlessly to the ground. Achilles ran forward, crouching behind his shield. We could see what Hector could not — that behind its cover Achilles had picked up the fallen spear. Hector had drawn his sword, and with gathering speed was running down the slope. We yelled and shouted in an agony of apprehension, but our warning was indistinguishable in the general clamor. Achilles, almost kneeling, kept his ground. Not until Hector was almost upon him did he thrust forward the long Trojan lance.

The fall of the ground defeated Hector's last-moment attempt to check his onrush. A cry of horror and anguish arose as he impaled himself on the steady lance, and Achilles' strong arm thrust home the fatal blow. As Hector fell Achilles rose. He pulled the lance from Hector's neck and drove it through and through his body, then shook it with fierce derision at the Trojan walls, loud with anger and lamentation.

Polites was weeping unashamedly. Deiphobus stamped about, cursing and lifting frenzied hands to the skies.

Glaucus looked at me and made a wry face. "A foul, dirty trick," he growled. "They just don't know how to fight fair."

A bow thrummed. With keen eyes Paris watched the long arrow, frowning and intent. The shaft fell short, and skidded to the very feet of Achilles. He picked it up, waved it, and snapped it over his knee. Paris sighed, and sat down suddenly, holding his head in his hands.

Glaucus caught my arm, in a frantic grip. "The swine — oh, the bloody barbarian swine!" he choked. Around the body of Hector, now stripped of its armor, the Achaian chiefs had gathered; and none forebore to heap indignities

upon a fallen foe. They who had feared him, living, now cut and thrust and stabbed at his poor lifeless body, with shouts of execration. A moan of anger and pity tingled to the heavens at this typical emergence of the savage from the veneer of Achaian civilization; a cry that swelled to a heartrending roar as the circle suddenly opened, and the chariot of Achilles galloped over the stony plain, dragging behind it in the dust, feet first, the stripped, dishonored body that had been the pride of Troy.

Three times Achilles dragged the lifeless corpse behind his swift chariot before the city, beneath the eyes of Priam, Hecuba and the princes. Three times the old king leaned from the tower, holding out imploring arms to the wild-eyed Myrmidon intoxicated with victory and the lust of blood. Three times the bounding chariot swept by, the body bumping and leaping in its track, the driver shouting frenziedly, laughing in exultation, a white foam upon his bearded lips.

Paris fitted another arrow to his string; his face was white and set. But the chariot was making for the Achaian lines, and once again Achilles passed beyond our reach. The shouting hordes closed about the gleaming car. The dust subsided, and we saw him no more.

Chapter Eleven

THE DEATH OF HECTOR WAS A CONTINGENCY AGAINST which we had always been prepared. Deiphobus assumed command of the army, and no serious dislocation occurred. To the Ilians the loss of Hector was painful and grievous. Our allies, to whom he was little more than a trusted and respected commander, were less affected. Deiphobus was well known and liked; allegiance was transferred to him without fuss, and things went on much as before.

Nevertheless we missed Hector sorely. He was a fine fighter, a man of high integrity in public and private life, and a loyal and generous friend. I pass over the grief of those who loved him, it can be imagined.

Under Deiphobus the conduct of the war began to change. He was a rather better general than his brother, who inclined to abandon a set plan and plunge into the thickest of the fight with little thought but of those he encountered. The Achaians had sometimes profited by this to keep fresh troops in reserve, throwing them into the mêlée so as to decide the day's fighting in their favor. Deiphobus, however, had the gift of mental detachment; he was less impatient of advice; and though our successes were perhaps less spectacular under his leadership, they were cumulatively destructive to the Achaians, and we suffered fewer reverses.

Of us all, Paris, I think, was the most upset by Hector's tragic end. Since his return from Egypt he had conceived a firm, though hidden, admiration for his brother; seeing in him much that he might have been himself. Hector had shouldered his quarrel in the name of Troy; upon him fell all the responsibility, for Priam was little more than a figure-head when it came to war. When Paris came to know him better he was, I believe, secretly ashamed of the vindictiveness he'd shown on the day of the games.

"If I hadn't left Ida," he said bitterly to me, "he'd still have been alive."

"Perhaps. But this war had to come. You were a convenient pretext."

"That's what Hector said. I went and had it all out with him after Diomedes and Odysseus had been with Menelaus' message. He was very decent about it all. We might have become good friends, if he'd lived."

"He liked you, and judged you a good fighter. And he died as he lived: in honor."

"You call that — exhibition — honor?"

"The shame was not Hector's. It will damn Achilles and the Achaians who had a part in it wherever the story is told."

"Achilles shall pay for it. I've sworn that, and already a plan is hatching."

"Oho! Be careful. He's a bit beyond your control, yet."

"I shan't fight him. He's going out like the mad dog that he is."

"An ambush?"

"Say a trap."

"I agree he was out of his mind at the time, but I think we might make allowances. The death of Patroclus upset him badly."

"Filthy beast. Well he shan't be parted very long from his pretty cousin."

"Whatever Patroclus was, he fought bravely and well."

"In your eyes, Achates, that redeems any sin in any man. It doesn't in mine. Achilles has done what he has done, and shall pay the penalty. I have sworn it."

Well, that was Paris' affair; he didn't seem inclined to tell me more, and I let it go at that. I think that, secretly, we were rather nervous of Achilles. A legend of invincibility had sprung up about him, and he was certainly the best fighter on the Achaian side. Except for an occasional brush in the battle, none of our people — the acknowledged champions, I mean — had really met him. My one and only encounter had ended ingloriously, as so often was the way, when a crowd of scufflers swept us apart. But I made up my mind from that time to find and kill him, or die in the attempt. I hoped to do so before Paris put his mysterious plan into operation.

Glaucus and Aeneas both had the same ambition. They spoke to me of it separately. I kept silent about my own hopes, but resolved to be there first if I could. It looked like being a pretty race.

I have said little of the motives that had impelled me to a soldier's life from the time I could bear arms. My father had been a famous fighter in his day, being one of the Argonauts, and had inculcated in me from an early age the dream of glory and high honor. I had spoken truly when I told Antenor I was not ambitious for power or wealth; but it was my hope that in some small way I might achieve enough that my name should not be all unknown when men talked of war. It seemed to me that some honor might be gained in killing Achilles, especially since his unspeakable treat-

ment of dead Hector. Even in the attempt one might die worshipfully. I have said all this not out of vainglory, but to explain why I did not quite agree with Paris' plan to do Achilles ingloriously to death.

I saw little of Paris for a day or two. We did not leave Troy, and he spent a good deal of time at the palace — and, oddly enough, with Antenor. The next I heard was the electrifying news that Priam and Antenor were going to the Achaian camp to ask Achilles for Hector's body.

All Troy crowded the streets and walls as the royal chariot set out on its melancholy mission. With Aeneas I watched from one of the gate towers, and we were both astounded to see young Polyxena in the car.

"Exactly what does that mean?" Aeneas demanded.

"Let's ask Paris. I think he can explain."

"He's being very mysterious about something lately, has he confided in you?"

"Not in detail."

"If Polyxena is part of the plan, I don't like it."

"A lot depends on whether she's just being used, or knows what she is about."

"I still don't like it. We can deal with Achilles, without hiding behind our women."

"There's more in it than that. He wants to arrange a doom for Achilles with godlike retribution."

"Something artistically inglorious, with Polyxena as a bait? You don't reassure me."

"He's taken the shaming of Hector bitterly to heart."

"If he's not careful he'll have a sister shamed as well."

"Not Polyxena. She's Hector's sister, too — and very much Polyxena."

"I'm going to see Paris about it."

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"I'll come with you."

But we got little satisfaction. Paris told us it was Polyxena's own idea. Aeneas, fearing that Creusa might feel concerned, went to give her what comfort he could.

When we were alone Paris laughed at me. "His father is too friendly with Antenor," he said. "I don't know how far Aeneas is safe with secrets."

"Then you do know more about Polyxena than you told him?"

"Of course. But I told him the essence of the truth. It was her idea — after I'd told her mine."

"Stop being so cryptic, Paris. If you're going to tell me, do so. If not, let's talk about something else."

"I can rely on your silence?"

"I have not asked your confidence."

Paris laughed. "Dear diplomat!" he murmured. "Quite incapable of saying yes or no; and dying of curiosity, too. Well, I'll trust you. The fact is, we're turning a dirty little plot of Antenor's against him — and Achilles. He suggested that Polyxena should go with them and use the power of her charms on Achilles. He had the idea that the hero would use his influence with Agamemnon to call off the war, so that he could marry the girl. You know how hotblooded he is; all impetuosity, and very much in favor now, I suspect, after his — victory. Very well. But our Polyxena doesn't want to be married, least of anyone in the world to her brother's killer, so she flatly refused. But when I pointed out that it would be necessary to arrange one or two clandestine meetings, to keep the Phthian pot boiling, she began to look thoughtful — remembering what a magnificent shot her brother Paris is with a bow . . ."

"So that's it! Antenor will be pleased!"

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"I can't help about Antenor. He'd betray us if he could, the old scoundrel."

"I know, but I didn't know you did. So much the better. I warn you, though, that there's a long list of people hoping to meet Achilles, with the same end in view, but perhaps less romantically devised."

"They'd better hurry, then. If Polyxena uses her eyes with their usual devastating effect, we shall be having serenades under the wall nightly from now on."

The value of Priam and Polyxena as hostages made us rather anxious for them, particularly as they didn't return that night. Cassandra kept a sleepless vigil in the Scaean tower. Soon after dawn she told her mother that they were on their way, with Hector's body. Nothing could be seen, and little notice was taken of her; but sure enough, in an hour or so the watchman reported the return of the party.

Hector's homecoming was sad and impressive to a degree. I felt strangely moved. The chariot advanced slowly, and a moan of sympathy and sorrow arose as the Trojans looked on the upraised, covered figure. Priam was erect and calm, staring straight before him; dignified and proud, he showed at his most kingly in the hour of his deepest grief. Polyxena was veiled and inconspicuous, but I saw the glance she sent to the Scaean tower, where Paris watched. The message was unmistakable.

Achilles' course was nearly run.

* * * * *

Priam made it known that he had been received by Achilles with courtesy and respect. Achilles had granted his request, and had even been moved to make a short but

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dignified speech in which he had likened Priam's sorrow to his own grief, and declared them bound in ties of unhappiness. This confirmed my impression, that so brave a man as Achilles could not be altogether damnable; that he suffered from a violent and ungovernable choler; and was probably glad of a chance to atone for his furious excess. It was significant that even before the arrival of Priam, Hector's body had been cleansed, the wounds closed, and the corpse set out in some honor.

A truce of twelve days had been agreed, to allow the preparation and celebration of funeral rites for Hector and Patroclus. This struck me as being unnecessarily long, but the reason soon became clear.

Always an opportunist, Agamemnon worked his men feverishly to repair the broken stronghold. Moreover, having received a concession from Priam to cut timber on Ida for Patroclus' pyre, they brought enough in to serve as materials for engines of assault to last them the rest of the war. I was not surprised to learn that it had been Agamemnon who, with apparent generosity, had set the period of the truce.

Paris had that much advantage over me in the race for Achilles' blood.

As soon as I heard of the truce I asked leave for a few days of Deiphobus, and called on Paris.

"I'm going to see Oenone," I told him. "Can I give her any message from you?"

He regarded me rather wistfully, and hesitated.

"N-no," he said slowly. "Just — mention my name, and tell her. . . . Oh, there's nothing that can be said! I've been thinking a lot about her, lately. Sometimes I wonder if Helen is really worth — all this."

With an effort: "Come with me," I said, "and make things

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up with Oenone. She'll teach you to forget Helen."

"Nobody could do that. But if I did, where would you come in, Achates?"

"I? I have never counted for much with Oenone. I never shall, while you live."

He regarded me curiously. "You're a faithful old idiot, Achates," he observed, "to me as well as to her. I suppose you sit at a respectful distance, and listen humbly while she tells you how she will wait for me to go back — that she will never change — always be waiting. I suppose you've never in your life kissed her, never stifled the words on her lips, or crushed her resistance until she was all helpless and bewildered. . . . God! Achates. D'you think that's how I won Helen?"

* * * * *

I don't claim to know much about women. Apart from one or two very minor affairs in my early days I have had little to do with them. Which probably accounts for an ineradicable idealism where they are concerned. It was not easy to overcome a lifetime's awe and veneration, as of something sacred, remote, and above human frailty; and to regard any woman as being possessed of passions, weaknesses, contradictions. Especially such a woman as Oenone.

I went over in my mind, as I journeyed next day to Ida, all that had ever passed between us. Paris had certainly summed up my attitude with some insight. And a very unimpressive figure I must have made in his eyes. I wondered how far his recipe for winning her love was to be trusted. He should know, far better than I. He seemed to have been remarkably successful in his conquests. I wondered, too, if

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I might paraphrase the fighting policy I'd quoted to Antenor: "Go straight for your woman: kiss her hard, and kiss her often." It was worth trying. At the worst I should be little worse off than before. If it succeeded, I should have set the crown on my life's ambition.

Paris seemed to be wavering; but he had set Oenone free. He could scarcely complain if, by taking his advice, I placed Oenone forever beyond his reach. I'd given him every chance; from now on it was he or I. And if I won, he could have Achilles — with my blessing.

Ida looked very lonely without the accustomed herds. Timber was being felled and dragged by both Trojans and Achaians, though severely apart. Higher up, the mountain was solitary and deserted; the grove of Cybele was overgrown and untended. Oenone's hut, however, stood serene and unviolated, and she came to the door at the sound of my horse. It was clear from her face that she had hoped for Paris, but she gave me her hands with her usual fascinating charm.

I wasted neither words nor time, though I confess I trembled considerably as I pulled her close to me and kissed her with all my soul on my lips. For a moment she was too astonished to resist. Then she stiffened, and would have drawn away, except that I held her more tightly. And presently, to my wonder and great joy, she relaxed, her arms stole shyly about my neck, and her lips no more avoided mine.

When at last I let her go, "Achates!" she breathed. "Why — oh, why did you do that?"

"For a thousand good reasons, but one is enough. I love you."

She stared at me bewilderedly. "I know. But — Achates, I wish you hadn't — "

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"Do you — really? I'm sorry for that, because I'm going to do it again." And I did. I felt fiercely elated. A wild exultation surged up in me, and I cared nothing for the struggle she was having with her heart. Had I not battled with my own long enough?

"Oenone," I said, "you may as well make up your mind to it. You are going to marry me."

A mischievous smile upturned the corners of her lovely mouth. "I don't see how I can very well avoid it, if you keep on as you've started," she murmured. Rightly or not I took that as a further invitation, and for a while time passed very happily.

"I won't ask you to come to Troy with me," I told her. "We'll go away — right away from Ilion. The Trojans are in a strong position, they can do very well without me. A few more weeks should see the end of the war; but we shall be in Egypt."

She became more serious. "No, Achates," she said, with decision.

"Why not?"

"I will not come between you and your honor, for one thing. For another, I am resolved to wait here until the end of the war. I know that Alex will seek me here — if only to die."

"Ah!"

"But," she went on, "if, after the war, he still yearns for Helen, and goes to join her — then, Achates, you may come to me. For I shall know my dreams have lied."

"You will marry me — freely and willingly?"

"Freely and happily. But, Achates, it can be no more than second best. You will always remember that, and — make allowances?"

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"My dear, I would take you gladly and humbly on any terms."

"Except for that there won't be any. You've taught me something today that I never knew, Achates."

"What is that?"

"My heart can hold two men at the same time."

"But Alex still owns the greater share?"

"Yes. I'm sorry; but —"

"I'm not. It will provide an excuse for taking the lesson farther."

"That your heart is in a stage of transition."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh! And — how do you purpose to — drive the lesson home?"

I showed her in the only really satisfactory way.

* * * * *

That night, for the first time, and with her consent, I stayed alone with her at the cottage. And for all the remaining period of the truce. They were the happiest days of my life.

But my cursed idealism — sense of decency, blatant idiosyncrasy, crass folly, call it what you will — held me from the one thing that would have made her surely mine.

* * * * *

I found Troy full of bustle for the morrow's resumption of hostilities. Hector's funeral had been a magnificent affair — which, with all respect, I was not sorry to have missed — and our people were now burning to avenge him. Deiphobus planned to keep the Achaians penned; moreover he had in

mind something entirely new — a secret blockade by sea. He hadn't been idle during the truce, swift messengers had scoured the Euxine coasts, and a respectable force of galleys had gathered at Abydos, near the Aigaian mouth of the Hellespont, and would sail as soon as we could man them.

"I want you to command them, Achates," he said. "You have had some experience of fighting at sea, and I can rely on you to keep a cool head. Roughly, I want you to harry their communications and stop their seaborne supplies, particularly from Lemnos and Achaia. I leave you to do it as you think best. If you keep out of sight of our coasts, it will be some time before they realize you're operating on the sea."

This was an enterprise after my own heart, though Pielus was profoundly disgusted. But he refused to stay behind. "I've been at your back since you were a baby," he growled, "and I'm not to be scared off by a wave or a puff of wind — curse them!"

I chose my men from among the coast nations, and went to say farewell to Glaucus, Aeneas, and Paris. All three were too much obsessed with their plans for killing Achilles to be particularly envious. I must admit that since my success with Oenone I viewed the world with a large-hearted tolerance, and sought no more to be first. I even found myself regretting that so brave and worthy a man should meet his inevitable end in this senseless strife.

"Antenor's very pleased with himself," Paris told me. "Achilles affected to be quite unimpressed by Polyxena's charms. But Antenor has seen him since, and says he's quite crazy about her; he talked of nothing else. He's practically forgotten Patroclus already. Antenor is tormenting him with hope deferred, he let him speak to Polyxena once, out-

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side the gates, at dead of night. Polyxena didn't say much about it, but I gather he rather took her breath away. Not that it made any difference, of course. But she didn't expect quite such a turn of speed in the man who'd just killed her brother."

"When is she seeing him again?"

"Tonight."

"Alone?"

"Antenor will be within call."

"I wonder how deaf he could be, if he tried?"

"Oh, I shan't be far off, believe me!"

"With bow?"

"No. Not until after the truce. Besides, I want a clear night with a good moon. I shall only have one shot. I mustn't fail."

"Don't let Polyxena meet him more than she must."

"Why not?"

"You should know the answer to that, your knowledge of women is so much greater than mine."

"Is that sarcasm, Achates?"

"On the contrary; a genuine tribute."

Paris cocked a knowing eye at me and began to laugh. "So it worked, then?"

"I haven't the least idea what you're talking about."

He clapped me on the shoulder. "I may be all sorts of cad," he said, "but on my life, Achates, I'm glad. You're the best good fellow I know. And Oenone —" he paused. "If there had never been a Helen," he added, "I'd have killed you, rather than —"

"Paris, tell me truly. Do you still love Helen?"

"As much as when I took her away. No. More."

"After the war —"

"The day the last Achaian leaves these shores I'm for Egypt — before Menelaus gets there. Helen is only in a temple; they'll hardly be guarding her night and day, after all this while. Pharaoh will have forgotten me; also I've grown a beard. It shouldn't be hard to spirit her away."

"I've friends in Egypt. If I sent to them, they might help you. I'm sure Meri-mentu would do all he could — especially if I let him know that as soon as you find Helen — "

"Yes?"

"I can marry Oenone."

"Is that how it is?"

"Yes."

"Oh!" For a while he was silent. Then, "What if I shouldn't go to Helen?"

I regarded him steadily. "I think I should, if I were you," I said, with deliberation.

"That sounds almost like a threat!"

"It's advice you'll do well to follow."

"Achates! So masterful! No wonder Oenone found you irresistible."

"She didn't. That's the one condition. And you are going to fulfil it."

He laughed. "Whether I want to or not?"

"I've no further interest in your feelings. But keep away from Oenone."

"Do you know, when you speak like that, I'm in half a mind to defy you."

"Just for fun?"

That steadied him. He looked at me, and shook his head.

"No, Achates," he said. "Everything's over between Oenone and me. You can tell her that I'm going to give my life to regaining Helen — even if I lose it in the attempt."

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"I will — when I see her again. I'm leaving for Abydos tonight. Take care of yourself — and young Polyxena."

"I'll care for her like a brother. That's funny, isn't it? I still haven't become accustomed to the idea. I'm half in love with the child myself."

"Your capacity for affection is boundless. I suppose it couldn't stretch to Achilles?"

"He's outside all limits. Fair winds to you, Achates; come back to us."

Chapter Twelve

THE ISLAND OF NEX LIES ABOUT SIX HUNDRED STADIA southwest of the Hellespont and roughly one hundred and fifty south of the southwest corner of Lemnos. It is little more than a mountain rising out of the sea, but there is a depression in the coastline — hardly to be called a bay — which gave sufficient anchorage for my little fleet. Here I made a base, from which to watch and harry traffic between Thessaly, Lemnos and Tenedos, without attracting too much attention to my activities.

The islanders were few in number and very primitive and poor. The Achaians had been there, but finding little to pillage and no strategical advantage in holding the island, had left them untroubled. They were taciturn and suspicious; but when I showed clearly that we meant them no harm, and were willing to pay for all they supplied us, they became more friendly, and gave us all the help of their limited means.

I had thirty-seven ships, of which twenty-four carried sail, the rest being rowing galleys. Only a few of the biggest were much good in any sort of seaway, and the winter storms kept us much in port. But we did some good work nevertheless.

Our venture started auspiciously enough. Cruising between Lemnos and Tenedos, six strong, we met a big trad-

ing vessel of Lemnian build, carrying Ilian prisoners to the slave market at Hephaistia in Lemnos. So long had the Achaians held the seas that we aroused no suspicion until we closed and started shooting arrows. Apart from the prisoners she was lightly manned, and a short scuffle as we boarded put a swift end to the crew's resistance. We made no prisoners; we could not afford our secret to become known. But we took the Ilions to Nex, where they became very useful, as reserves and for repairing our ships and maintaining supplies.

I sent out relays of ships, never fewer than six at a time, to patrol across and across the routes east and west of Lemnos. When we struck, we made no mistake, nor left any trace. The Achaians must have been disturbed at the non-arrival of so many ships, but so well was our secret kept that they never sent out to inquire what had become of them.

We began to accumulate quite a treasury at Nex. In addition the captured ships, of all sorts and sizes, augmented our fleet to such an extent that before the turn of the year I decided upon a major operation.

Antandros and Gargaros, on the south coast of Ilion, had been occupied by Achaian garrisons since the early days of the war. From these towns they shipped cattle and other supplies to the camp before Troy, brought from as far inland as they dare safely venture. Deiphobus had stopped the overland traffic; I intended to complete the good work.

As soon as the weather served I sailed with a very strong force — the largest that had ever sailed together from Nex. We made our dispositions after nightfall. The cooking-fires and torches gave us our bearings; and the crews of several of the rowing galleys disembarked at a beach about halfway between the two towns. Their job was to prevent a retreat

to the Idaian hills, and to make sure that news of our attack was not carried to the Achaian camp.

The two towns were lightly held; our forces were overwhelming. The attack began at dawn. Soon after full daylight the garrisons had been completely destroyed. We carefully removed all traces of the action. I left Pielus in temporary command at Antandros, with enough men to take the Achaian ships as they came unsuspectingly in; sent the fleet back to Nex under my second-in-command; and went alone to Troy with a report for Deiphobus. I wanted him to garrison the ports; my own men were far too useful to be left ashore.

"I haven't heard a whisper of you since you left us," he told me. "Either you've not had much success, or you have been mightily secret about it."

When I gave him a summary of our activities, ending with the news that I held Antandros and Gargaros for Troy, he stared, and clapped my shoulder.

"The idea was mine, but you've worked it out better than I'd dared to hope," he said, with enthusiasm. "I'll certainly send garrisons, but we'll want a good man to lead them. Whom do you suggest?"

"It's Dardan country; I'd thought of Aeneas."

"No." He was very firm. "He's too young. Besides —" He paused, then, "I'd rather keep him here, under my eye."

Apparently the old mistrust was not dead.

"Then what about Glaucus and his Lycians?"

"The very man." Deiphobus laughed. "I'll be glad to have him away. He won't take any orders; he tells me I can do what I like with his men, but he's going for Achilles. Aeneas is less insubordinate, but quite as determined. I'll

be glad when Achilles is finished off, so that we can get on with the war."

"He's still alive, then?"

"Very much so. But our people aren't nearly so nervous of him. Aeneas had a solo with him not long back, and exploded once and for all the story of his invulnerability. He gave Achilles an anxious ten minutes, and managed to lay him up for two or three weeks with assorted wounds. He hurt Aeneas' hip with a lump of rock, or his story might have ended there. When he came out again Glaucus was waiting, and wounded him in the sword arm. The Myrmidons were taking good care of their hero, and drove Glaucus off as soon as Achilles went down. He and Aeneas are panting to get at Achilles again."

"Can you spare me for a day?" I asked. "I have rather a hope that way myself."

Deiphobus laughed, but shook his head. "You're doing good work from Nex," he said. "I can't let you off for even a day; besides, I might lose you altogether. Sorry, Achates, but you must leave at dawn. Glaucus shall go with you as far as Antandros."

I saw Aeneas and Creusa, and went on to Glaucus. He was overjoyed at his new command, and rushed straight off to detail his men. Paris could not be found; I tried everywhere, and it was pretty late by the time I decided to give him up and get a little sleep.

It was a still night with a clear moon. I had a sudden idea, and went to the Scaean Tower. At first, the place seemed deserted, except for the watchman on the turret; but on the stairs one of Paris' fellows tried to bar my way. I couldn't stop to argue; his loyalty deserved better than the buffet he received.

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Paris was standing by a bow-slit in the thick wall. His arrow was on the string, and he was very still. So much I saw in the dim glow of moonlight that gave me his profile in black. As I peered at him, footsteps and voices sounded from below.

"If that's Antenor and Polyxena, hold them at any price," he said, tensely. "He won't keep still. Ah, that's a bit better — only stay like that . . ."

Torchlight flickered on the stairs as he drew the shaft to his ear.

Polyxena's clear young voice called "Paris! Here I am! What is it; because he's waiting, and — Paris! What are you doing?"

"Hold her — only another moment . . . Now!"

The deep bow thrummed. Polyxena stood staring, her eyes wide with horror. As she leaped forward I put out my arm. Simultaneously Paris yelled, a wide, savage whoop of triumph.

"Right through the neck!" he shouted. "Here, take this." He thrust the bow at me, and bounded down the stairs, yelling to the keeper of the gate.

"Achilles is outside. Open, fool, open!"

"What's going on?" demanded the breathless voice of Antenor. His furtive, suspicious face appeared in the doorway. He peered at me, and the bow in my hands. "Achates, eh? Has Achilles been shot at?"

"And hit; I believe he's dead."

Polyxena screamed. "No — oh, no!" She struggled violently. "Achates, let me go! I must go to him — I must, I tell you!"

Antenor was shaking with fury. "If he's dead you'll hear more from me," he choked. "Let Polyxena go."

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"There can be no harm in that — now. She's played her part."

A roar of anger from outside the walls interrupted us. "Gone!" Paris bellowed. "God! was there ever such luck?"

A chariot was galloping down the long slope toward the Achaian lines. In it, beside the two men who shook angry fists at the city, lay a crumpled figure, of which they seemed to take little care.

Polyxena saw it, too. She drew a deep, shuddering breath.

"He's — dead," she said, dully; and suddenly slid to the floor.

Poor little Amazon! Not so very unlike Hippolyte, after all.

* * * * *

It didn't occur to me at the time that Antenor had concluded, from what he'd seen, that I had shot the fatal arrow. Until prisoners assured us that Achilles was really dead, Paris said little about it. Even then, to save his sister's name, only a few were told the real story. Antenor must have shut himself up with his rage and disappointment; and I suppose he was so convinced of his assumption that when he did emerge he overlooked any reference to Paris' hand in the affair, ascribing it to a conspiracy between us. All of which had a surprising sequel, as you shall presently see. Actually, of course, Paris had taken me for the man he'd put on the stairs.

I didn't sleep much that night. Glaucus and I left at the head of a thousand Lycians before dawn, so as to escape the notice of the Achaians.

When I told him I meant to make a quick call at Oenone's cottage, he insisted upon coming with me, sending his men

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on. I strongly commended the view from a little higher up the slope; he departed grinning, and for a while we forgot him. I told Oenone what Paris had said about Helen. She listened resignedly, made no comment, and was gratifyingly incensed when Glaucus returned after an indiscreetly short interval, to announce that the view was overrated. Oenone had impressed him vastly.

"Who is she?" he asked, as we rode on.

"The girl I hope to marry when the war's over."

"But why wait? Good God, man, all alone there —"

"It's her idea, not mine."

"Women have no business with ideas," he grumbled.

"What they have are always wrong — except one or two." He was for turning back then and there, and compelling her to come with us to Antandros.

"She wouldn't, and I can't force her. Besides, I'm going back to Nex; it would be too dangerous. And I shouldn't feel inclined to take risks."

Glaucus nodded. "Women and war don't mix," he agreed. "Well, it should soon be over now. There are one or two girls in Lycia . . . and some of the youngsters will have ripened while I've been away . . ."

He enlivened the rest of our ride with anecdote and reminiscence which I should dearly love to record, but which would lose much divorced from his deep, pleasant voice and riotous laugh. Besides . . .

Poor Glaucus! He never saw Lycia again.

* * * * *

As the winter passed and the Aegean became less troubled by storms and bitter winds we were more often at sea,

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but with greater caution; less from fear of the enemy than of spoiling our useful work by discovery. The toll we took steadily mounted, in material, ships and men. Both the proceeds of the war and the means of prosecuting it fell into our hands with gratifying regularity.

We heard with huge delight that the Achaians were convinced Poseidon was working against them, and that they were seeking to propitiate him with hecatombs of cattle they could hardly spare. Poseidon must have been highly pleased with this gratuitous addition to his larder — even though his supplicants ate the best bits. I never could understand how any self-respecting deity allowed himself to be mollified by portions which even slaves would have refused with indignation.

From time to time Glaucus sent me an Achaian ship that had fallen into his snare, either at Antandros or Gargaros, invariably accompanied by a ribald and exultant message. He seemed to be having the time of his life, and, I believe, indulged in a little light piracy on his own account.

To my great joy Abastes brought the *Nymph of Ida* to Nex. Glaucus had told him of my operations, and he was eager to join in. I took this as a happy augury; he had been away so long that I'd given him up for lost.

So the spring ripened into summer; but still the Achaians sat before Troy, thinned, weakened, almost desperate, but quite implacable. I began to grow impatient; the delay was maddening. Nothing but this stood now between Oenone and me. Deiphobus' policy of nibbling at the Achaians' defenses, fostering disaffection, and blockading supplies was well enough; but it was clear that they would not abandon the siege until they were driven from Ilion.

I went to Troy, and suggested to Deiphobus a combined

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assault from land and sea. I pointed out to him that I commanded a fleet of nearly a hundred ships and five thousand men, all good, hardened fighters. Also that we were in little better case than the Achaians to face another winter.

"If it doesn't succeed," he said, "it'll be the end of your sea operations. When the Achaians see your ships they will stop sacrificing to Poseidon."

"If it does succeed," I replied, "I'll make them a present of my fleet, to take them back to Achaia."

Deiphobus smiled. "They'll at least find themselves in familiar surroundings," he remarked.

With Polites and some of the allied chiefs we went into details, and a plan was finally agreed. I felt very satisfied with the result of my visit as I went back to Nex.

* * * * *

We sailed at the appointed time through a clear but moonless night and, standing well out from Tenedos, drew near the beaches as the night began to pale. It was a very similar action to the attack on Antandros, but on a far larger scale.

All seemed to be going well. Spread in a long, single line abreast, my ships were making for the shore under little more than steerage way, and with never a sound of oar or arms. When suddenly, a light flickered in the still distant camp, a hoarse shout echoed over the quiet water, and a trumpet shrilled a wild alarm.

Deiphobus' force had been discovered. How it happened we never found out; but the Achaians were in arms and standing to the earthwork before the attack could be delivered. The virtue of surprise was gone, but Deiphobus went

forward, and was soon hammering at the gates with great vigor.

Fortunately, the drawn-up ships on their stocks almost hid from the Achaian camp the sea beyond. Moreover, the earthwork enclosed a considerable area, deepest where the attack was developing. Our cautious approach was therefore observed by very few, and we were over them before an alarm could be given.

I led a fierce charge in the direction of the gate, thrusting the astonished Achaians to each side and pinning them back against the earthwork. So sudden and violent was our attack in the still, ghostly light that they probably imagined us five times our actual strength. They gave uncertainly, and in the confusion we opened the gate and let the Trojans in. The battle that followed was one of the most stubborn and bitter of all that war.

Deiphobus led the Ilians with consummate skill. Time and again he herded the Achaians in a disordered mass with their backs to the invitingly open gate; but they would not be driven through it. Some of their best men — Odysseus, Diomedes, the two Aiases, Agamemnon, old Nestor of Pylos — lashed them with biting words and prodigious example. One tall figure stood in the way of my immediate party. I cut a path to him, and leaped with upraised axe.

"Don't be a damned fool, Achates," said Idomeneus. I lowered my weapon in disgust.

"Why had it to be you?" I said, bitterly. "Stand aside, Idomeneus; I am not to be stopped. I'm sorry, but if I'm to lose my friend or my honor —"

He laughed. "Neither, this time," he said. "Only your liberty — for a little while." He glanced over my shoulder; just too late I turned. A heavy blow came crashing down

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on my helmet. I saw Pielus leap on the man, and knew no more.

* * * * *

"The trouble with you is, you talk too much," Pielus grumbled. "You should have hit him first and apologized after."

Unwisely I nodded my aching head. I must have been unconscious all day, for it was quite dark. A small lamp burned smokily in the tent where Pielus and I sat alone.

"I wish I had. How did the battle go?"

"Famously. We drove them out at last and scattered them all over the country; they must have lost half their people. They've only started to creep back since night fell. Our ships got away without trouble."

"Good. How is it you're here? Were you taken, too?"

"In a manner of speaking."

I regarded him steadily; he avoided my eye.

"I think I understand," I said. "Thank you, Pielus."

He flushed deeply. "A lot of good you'd be by yourself," he muttered. "Here, let me put this cold cloth on your head."

"I suppose I'm Idomeneus' prisoner?"

"Yes. He stood over you until it was safe to move you. This is his tent. He wants me to call him when you're fit to talk."

"Fetch him, then."

Idomeneus was all contrition. "It had to be you or me, Achates," he said, "and I didn't at all like the look of your nasty little axe."

"I wish I'd hit you with it. I'd rather you had this headache than I."

Idomeneus regarded me reproachfully. "You call that friendship?" he murmured. "Put it down to my pressing need of your company in this benighted, god-forsaken camp. Oh, Achates, I've been bored — bored! Why did I ever leave Crete?"

"You never had any sense. You're fighting on the wrong side."

"I sometimes think so. That young Paris of yours is worth twenty of Menelaus. I've been hearing things — and seeing them. God, Achates! you'd think this was a stud farm! That reminds me: Menelaus wants to see you rather particularly; do you feel strong enough?"

"Let's get it over, if he must. What sort of place is this, where they don't offer even friends a drink?"

Idomeneus jumped to his feet with an apologetic grin, produced wine, and left the tent. I heard a faint, soft rustle from the back of the tent, and looked down to see the canvas cautiously raised, and a short, portly man slither in. As he raised his head I recognized Abastes.

"Pielus," I murmured. "Is it my head, or —"

Pielus glanced down dispassionately. "It's Abastes all right," he observed. "You can smell him," he added, superfluously. Abastes looked hurt.

"I've got a galley waiting at the southern end," he whispered hoarsely, "drawn up on the beach. She's an Achaian, and not likely to be noticed. The rowers are hiding just outside the earthwork."

"Good. I'll be with you before — Wait, though." I thought rapidly. "Give me a knife, Abastes."

"I've brought two."

"Give the other to Pielus. Get back and wait for us; we may be some time. But when we come we may be followed.

Have the men ready for a quick start. I hope to bring a prisoner with me."

Abastes nodded, and beckoned to Pielus, who bent down.

"Mind you don't cut yourself," the shipman said; then, with a throaty chuckle, wriggled silently away.

The outraged Pielus flushed scarlet, glanced reproachfully at me, and hid his knife away in his clothes. "Who's coming with us?" he growled.

There were footsteps outside, and the flap was lifted. "Menelaus," said Idomeneus, unconsciously.

I winked at Pielus, and nodded toward Idomeneus. As the two men came in Pielus moved unostentatiously into the shadows by the Cretan.

Menelaus looked down at me. "You're the first prisoner of any account we've taken," he said, unpleasantly. "Perhaps we'll get some truth from you."

"Conceivably."

"How are things in Troy?"

"Unlike Sparta, we have our king among us."

He flushed with anger. "That's no answer," he said.

"It raises another question, though. How are things in Sparta?"

"You seem to forget that you are a prisoner."

"I remember that I am Idomeneus' prisoner."

"That's beside the point."

"As you please."

Menelaus turned to Idomeneus, who had listened with a half-smile to this fascinating exchange of courtesies.

"Will you please ask him to treat me with the respect I deserve?" he demanded.

Idomeneus surveyed him with some amusement. "He seems to be doing so," he remarked dryly.

Pielus coughed ostentatiously, and Menelaus turned to me again with menacing eyes. "I want information, and, by my father's head, I'm going to get it!"

"How?"

"There are several ways of inducing you to talk."

I stared at him. "Whom do you mistake me for, you dirty little cuckold?" I demanded.

Idomeneus chuckled; Menelaus went nearly black with rage. "By the beard of Zeus, I'll teach you to speak to me in a different tone!" he roared.

"You seem to think so. But if you could possibly moderate your own a little — my head aches confoundedly."

With an effort he controlled himself, though his knuckles still showed white. "I won't descend to exchanging abuse with you," he said, loftily. "I suppose you want this war to end as much as we do."

"It's in your hands to end it."

"Ah! Now we're getting on. How?"

"By finishing your fight with Paris. It was no fault of his that it was interrupted."

He set his teeth. "That's impossible," he said. I shrugged. "Surely," he went on, "it wouldn't hurt you, or your friends, to tell me where Helen is."

"If I did, you wouldn't believe me."

He regarded me narrowly. "You were in Egypt when, according to the story, they came before Pharaoh. I've heard of you as a man of honor, Achates. Give me your word, and I'll believe you."

Now this was excessively awkward. I didn't want him to believe, now, that Helen was in Egypt. I wanted to make sure Paris found her first. Yet the alternative was to prolong the war unnecessarily, merely in order to fulfil my

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personal hopes; and that I couldn't do. Idomeneus was watching me intently.

I stood up. "I can't tell you," I said. "But I'll tell you who can."

"Who?"

"Paris."

"But he's in Troy."

"Exactly."

"Then how does that help?"

"You can ask him."

"You're making a fool of me, Achates!"

"I'm not the first."

He stamped with rage. I grinned at him.

"Let's go and ask Paris, shall we?" I said, calmly.

"To Troy? You're mad!"

"You don't expect him to come here, do you? I warn you he's rather — fastidious."

"Not meaning me," Idomeneus explained. "Only you."

Menelaus regarded me doubtfully. "Hadn't you better lie down?" he said in an altered tone. "You've had a nasty knock, and —"

"So I have; a little cool air will do us both good. Besides, I'm anxious to see what he'll say, for reasons of my own. Idomeneus, we'll settle my ransom — after the war."

Idomeneus jumped from his seat as I made an almost imperceptible sign. With deep satisfaction Pielus kicked him in the stomach; as the Cretan's head came forward he lifted him with a neat right to the point of the chin. Idomeneus subsided slowly, and took no further part in the proceedings.

I moved to the astounded Menelaus and stuck the point of my knife between his ribs. "We're going to Troy. I hope this hint won't need driving home," I said.

Pielus removed his sword and knife — a slow thinker, Menelaus — and we emerged from the tent, closer than brothers. A sentry stood courteously aside to let us pass; Menelaus was sorely tempted, but a jab of my knife restored his good sense.

Beyond the tents he began to laugh gently; I expect he was thinking of Idomeneus. "I believe I've misjudged you, Achates," he said.

"I began by telling you so."

"We've never met before, have we? You seem very prejudiced. Isn't it equally possible that you've been mistaken in me?"

"I don't think so. You're an Achaian, and they're all swine. You made your domestic quarrel a national affair, which proves you a worm. Thousands of men have died because you won't fight Paris; for which you're a murderer. Swine, worm, murderer. How can you expect me not to loathe you? The very touch of you is unclean."

The vanity in him rose to that, as indeed I'd hoped; for I was feeling far from well, and very tired of holding so close to him. With a shout of rage he turned on me; I stood aside while Pielus laid him out. My head was swimming; I felt suddenly dizzy and sick and stumbled to my knees. Pielus slung Menelaus over his shoulder, and turned anxiously to me.

"I can't go on," I gasped. "You'll have to leave me."

"It's only another two stadia —"

"It's no good, Pielus, I can't."

"Just wait while I stick a knife in this Achaian bastard; I'll carry you and leave him."

I laughed weakly. "You're an inaccurate genealogist and a faithful fool," I said. "He's more use alive to Troy than

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a thousand of me. Take him to Antandros. Tell Glaucus from me to deliver him to Paris. And — go quickly.”

“I’ll dump him in the boat and come back for you.”

“No such thing. Idomeneus may give the alarm. I’ll never forgive you if they retake Menelaus. Now go — and good luck. I’ll throw them off the track.”

“I won’t go without you.”

“Pielus — my life and happiness hang on it.”

For a moment he hesitated, then he clasped my hand. “I shan’t leave him until he’s given to Paris,” he said, gruffly.

“After that — ”

He turned, and stamped off toward the waiting boat.

* * * * *

Idomeneus was draining a wine cup as I crawled weakly back into the tent. He glanced at me, grinning, and poured another, for himself and me.

“Night air a bit strong?” he inquired, sympathetically. “Where’s Menelaus?”

“The last I saw of him, he was on his way to Troy.”

“Indeed! A change of heart, or under duress?”

“Pielus is a powerful arguer.”

“So I’ve noticed.” Idomeneus felt his chin tenderly. “Honors are about even, now, Achates. My head’s humming like a hive.”

“Why haven’t you given the alarm?”

He stared at me, his wine half lifted. “Ah, that! I suppose I should have done.”

“Go on, then. Do it now!”

He regarded me apprehensively. “Not if you’ve got that

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beastly little axe hidden somewhere about you," he said, with decision. "Did the sentry pass you?"

"Yes."

He sat back contentedly. "Then I don't see that I'm called on to interfere," he said. "Heigh-ho! I'll be glad to see Crete again! Any chance of your sailing back with me?"

I grinned. "That depends on whether I'm still your prisoner."

"My dear Achates, if this camp holds you a day I shall be astonished. The marvel to me is that I'm not in Troy."

"With all respect, we couldn't be bothered with your great carcass, or you might have been."

He sat up. "By the way, why didn't you go, too?"

I made a grimace, and touched my head.

He nodded sympathetically. "Have another drink," he invited.

"I'd rather go to bed, if your domestic arrangements will stretch to it."

Idomeneus grinned. "Always room for two in my tent," he remarked.

As we settled down for the night he chuckled. "So Menelaus is in Troy! Won't Arete be pleased!"

"Who's that?"

"The bright-eyed sharer of his repose. Rather proud of being Helen's successor, though she's only another eye in the peacock's tail."

Apparently the damsel was disturbed by the absence of Menelaus, for just as I was beginning to drowse, Agamemnon came stamping in. "Where's Menelaus?" he demanded, without preamble.

Idomeneus lifted himself on one elbow. "Really, this place is becoming quite impossible!" he complained, peev-

ishly. "Doesn't anybody ever go to sleep?"

"He's not in his tent —"

"Perhaps he's gone for a walk."

"At this time of night?"

"People do odd things. I should go a long, long way if I thought the amorous Arete was waiting for me."

"Has he been here?"

"I seem to remember him coming here, some time earlier in the evening. Night, rather."

"Where did he go?"

"I didn't see. I was asleep when he left."

Agamemnon regarded him with dislike. "I don't care for your manner, Idomeneus," he said. "You've been getting very difficult lately. If this goes on, I'll have to make an example of you."

Idomeneus roared with laughter. "Send me home in disgrace," he suggested. "I'd like nothing better. You'd have insubordination running like an epidemic through the camp, in the same hope."

Before Agamemnon could reply —

"I kidnaped Menelaus and sent him to Paris in Troy," I said, quietly.

Agamemnon stared at me. "And who in Hades are you?" he demanded.

"Don't take any notice of him," said Idomeneus, quickly. "He's just a prisoner. He's had a nasty whack on the head, and imagines things."

"You keep quiet, Idomeneus —"

"Well, I ask you. Does he look as if he could kidnap anybody?"

"He might — with help," Agamemnon said, darkly.

Idomeneus bridled. "What, me?" he demanded, with

virtuous indignation. "Lay hands on the sacred brother of my general? I might have done," he added, "only, as I tell you, I was asleep."

"Then you admit he was kidnaped?"

"I admit nothing. It cannot be said too often or too clearly: I was asleep. As I might be now, if only people would stop rushing in and out of my tent."

"Menelaus isn't in the camp. This man — Who are you, by the way?"

"Achates. Of Dardania."

"Indeed! I've heard of you. Well, what do you pretend you've done with Menelaus?"

"Sent him to Troy."

"How?"

"In a ship."

"A ship?"

"By way of Antandros."

"Is this the truth, Achates?"

"It's beneath my dignity to lie, even to you, Agamemnon."

He regarded me thoughtfully. "I suppose you know we hold Antandros?" he said.

"Since when?"

"The beginning of the war. You can't be ignorant of that . . ."

"I didn't know," I said, humbly.

Agamemnon stared at me penetratingly. "I can't imagine your motive in trying to make me believe your ridiculous story," he said, "and if any harm has come to Menelaus I'll talk with you further. But you don't deceive me, Achates. It's clear you are not a practiced liar."

An expression of unholy joy crossed Idomeneus' face.

"For one thing, none of our ships is missing. Anyhow,

who would you have found to sail it? Unless — ” Agamemnon glanced at Idomeneus keenly.

The Cretan shook his head. “Don’t blame me,” he said. “What have I to gain?”

“I’ll think about that while we’re looking for my brother. What did he come here about?”

“He seemed interested in conditions in Troy,” I replied. “I sent him to see for himself.”

Agamemnon made an impatient gesture.

“It’s his head,” Idomeneus explained. “He really believes it himself, I’m sure.”

“He’s probably bringing some of the wounded in, or reconnoitering,” Agamemnon said. “One thing I’m sure of is that he hasn’t gone to Troy — in a ship or otherwise.”

“He may be trying his luck with Polyxena,” said Idomeneus. “But don’t tell Arete.”

Agamemnon darted him a terrible look, and went out.

Idomeneus chuckled. As we settled down again, “Don’t tell me if you’d rather not,” he said, “and it won’t go any farther, but — when did you retake Antandros?”

“About three months ago.”

He nodded contentedly. “That explains many things,” he said. And we went to sleep.

Chapter Thirteen

MY MOVEMENTS ABOUT THE ACHAIAN CAMP WERE comparatively unrestricted. Idomeneus carefully abstained from asking my parole, and seemed faintly surprised, as day followed day, at finding me still among them. The truth was that I found much interest in the engines being constructed in the camp for an assault on Troy. The information I was acquiring, if the war didn't end — and we'd been as close before — would be very useful to Deiphobus. I had complete confidence in my ability to escape, especially with Idomeneus as gaoler.

The Achaians were fortunate in their engineer, one Epeios, a mild-eyed man with a thoughtful manner, whom I saw supervising the construction of a counter-work, novel in my experience.

It was a large tower with a projection at the top of one end. It was on wheels, and seemed to tilt forward, until one realized that the greater length of the two back legs would compensate for the slope of the ground outside the Trojan walls. The projection was obviously meant to overhang the parapet. The front was closed by a heavy door, hinged at the bottom, so that it could be lowered from inside to form a bridge. The front legs, assuming it in position, would be vertical; those at the back had a slight rearward rake. Being covered with a double skin of sun-dried hides, the whole

thing had an amusing resemblance to an elementary and somewhat cubical horse; in fact, it was referred to as such by the Achaians.

It struck me as being a very formidable affair, as the hides would be impervious to arrows and spears; the best defense would be a few barrels of oil and a fire-pot or two. Of course any number of men would be needed to drag it into place, and with determined shooting from the walls it might never get there. If it were brought very close during the night, the sacrifice of a large number in completing its journey would be justified by the results to be expected. They'd probably be slaves or prisoners, anyway. The body was big enough to hold about fifty men who, being pushed up with the tower, would avoid having to face our arrows. If they could cut down the defenders in its immediate neighborhood, the following forces could enter at the back in comparative safety.

I resolved to advise Deiphobus never to let it leave the Achaian camp. I didn't like the look of it at all. Idomeneus made no reference to it whatever.

The disappearance of Menelaus was known through the camp, but Agamemnon held that he was on some mission of his own, and asked me no more questions. He had sent out a search party, who had naturally found no trace of him. Odysseus was not satisfied, and came to see me. I stuck to my story. Even his subtle mind failed to recognize the truth when it was presented to him with every appearance of being a clumsy and palpable lie; and he gave me up in disgust. The one thing they didn't do was to send to Antandros.

I was considerably suprised when, on the third day after his abduction, Menelaus returned to the camp alone — except

for Pielus. He brought no terms; everything went on as before.

Pielus was inarticulate with fury. When he had unburdened himself a little, "Paris let him go," he said.

"Why?"

"I'll start at the beginning, or I'll choke. We didn't go to Antandros, as you told me. No point in letting Menelaus know we held it, just in case —"

"You've more sense than I, Pielus. I've been kicking myself ever since."

"You were a sick man; couldn't think of everything. We landed some way west of Gargaros, and I sent a message to Glaucus. We spent the night in a mountain hut, waiting for him to bring a chariot or two and an escort. We travelled all last night, and reached the city soon after dawn. Glaucus routed Paris out, and showed him what we'd brought." He paused and grinned. "Menelaus wasn't looking his best; we hadn't been over-careful in handling him, especially when once — only once — he tried to get away."

"I hope you didn't hurt him — much."

"Not much; but he became somewhat soiled. Paris looked at him, and said he'd be better able to talk with him after he — Menelaus — had taken a bath."

I chuckled. "I told him Paris was fastidious," I remarked.

Pielus nodded, with a grin. "He remembered that; it seemed to annoy him. I must say Paris treated him rather well; gave him some food, and decent clothes. For a long time he sat just staring at Menelaus — he wouldn't eat with him — while I told him the story.

"When Menelaus was ready he said to him, 'Are you willing to fight me, on the same terms as before?'

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“‘No,’ said Menelaus. ‘The Achaians won’t accept the same conditions again.’

“‘Fight me for Helen, then,’ Paris said.

“‘When we’ve taken Troy I shan’t need to.’

“‘Well, fight me for the pure love of fighting.’

“‘When I fight, it’s with a definite end in view.’

“Paris shrugged, but didn’t say any more. After some thought he stood up. ‘Come with me, Menelaus,’ he said. He led him down to the Scaean Gate, and had it opened. We went outside. Paris turned to Menelaus; he wasn’t smiling. ‘You’re free,’ he said.

“Menelaus couldn’t believe his ears. I suppose he had been shuddering at what he’d have done to Paris under similar circumstances. He stared, and tried to speak.

“‘If you had come of your own accord to fight me,’ Paris went on, ‘I’d have met you in honor. If you’d been taken in battle, you would have been treated as a prisoner — with honor. But as it is, I’ve no use for you. Troy is quite able to clear your Achaian swine out of Ilion, without using you as a lever. Go back and tell them so.’

“Menelaus spluttered a bit, but needed no second telling.

“Paris turned to me and gave me his hand. ‘It’s a fine thing you and Achates have done,’ he said, ‘and I’m infinitely grateful. Don’t think I’ve thrown it away. Believe me, it won’t be wasted. I suppose you are going back to him.’ I nodded, and he said — something which is no concern of yours.

“As I left him he called me back. ‘Tell Achates,’ he said, ‘I’ve learned where honor lies.’ ”

After all my hopes! He’d learned the lesson too well. But I couldn’t help feeling proud of the young idiot.

Menelaus came to see me soon after his return, and for a

few moments seemed at a loss what to say. With rare tact Idomeneus rose and went out.

"In the last day or two I've found reason to correct some wrong impressions," he began. "I'd like you to overlook our first conversation — my manner was scarcely conciliatory — and start afresh. I'm convinced, now, that wherever Helen is, she's not in Troy. I am going to ask my brother to withdraw, so that I can go to Egypt."

He watched me intently as he said this.

"Of course, he may refuse" Menelaus went on. "It can't be disguised that he has interests other than the recovery of Helen. And our allies have been put to a great deal of cost on our behalf. Troy is a wealthy city; and if we leave Ilion now, accepting failure, for many years to come Achaia will be seriously impoverished."

"In other words, they're hoping to sack the city."

"Not altogether unreasonably."

"From your point of view."

He laughed. "We can hardly expect to see eye to eye on that matter," he said. "Let it pass. Your man has no doubt told you what happened in Troy. Well, I'm not going to be outdone in generosity. I shall ask Idomeneus to let you go." He turned at the tent door, "And I could wish," he added, slowly, "that I had a friend as devoted."

I went out soon after for some air and exercise. The horse was apparently finished, and had been dragged to the gate facing Troy.

"A striking example of man's superiority to the beast," Idomeneus remarked at my shoulder. "Can you imagine the animals creating such an edifice for each other's destruction?"

"Spiders spin rather elaborate webs — "

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"But not to catch other spiders. I see that Menelaus is with us again, washed, dressed and well fed."

"He certainly seems none the worse for his journey."

"Alas, how true! He's making everyone madly jealous. Agamemnon is going to throw everything he's got into the next assault."

"Has Menelaus seen him yet?"

"Yes."

"Oh!"

There was a long silence; Idomeneus seemed rather uncomfortable. "Agamemnon has given me some rather special orders about you," he said.

"Don't try to break it gently."

"I'm to ask for your parole."

"And if I refuse?"

"I beg that you won't."

"The alternative being — "

"Chains."

"Oho! They begin to know who I am!"

"It would seem so. He resents having been taken in by the truth. He thinks you are dangerous. Menelaus has fallen out with him."

"I wondered if I had Menelaus to thank."

"Menelaus wanted you released. Agamemnon accused him of having been bribed, in one way or another, while he was in Troy — "

"It was all done by kindness — "

"I know. But Agamemnon doesn't believe everything he hears — even now. They exchanged a few opinions of each other, and parted in dudgeon. Immediately afterward, Agamemnon ordered the assault."

"And if it doesn't succeed?"

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"We shall sail, Agamemnon has conceded that."

"Then I certainly shan't give anyone my parole."

"I am to tell him that?"

"Go now."

Idomeneus looked at me uncertainly. "Will you still be here when I come back?" he wanted to know.

I started to laugh. "Can you imagine me escaping in broad daylight, with the whole camp astir?" I demanded.

He looked at land and sky and sea. "Easily," he assured me, "although for the moment a precise means eludes me. However, I'll take the chance."

"I'll come with you as far as Menelaus' tent."

"What do you want with him?"

I chuckled. "Perhaps in his gratitude for the cooking pots of Troy he'll introduce me to the delectable Arete," I replied.

Idomeneus shuddered. "The gods forbid!" he murmured; and left me.

Fortunately Menelaus was inside his tent. He looked up and nodded. "Sit down Achates," he said, gloomily, "I've seen my brother."

"Without success?"

"In a sense."

"Well, it was a forlorn hope, and we must make the best of it. I wondered if I could bathe in the sea?"

Menelaus looked very hard at me. "Can you swim?" he asked.

"A little. You can send a man down with me, if you like — in case I get into difficulties."

He considered, and a slow smile crossed his face. "Be careful of the currents — out beyond the shallows," he said.

"I should not expect you to grieve if I were swept away,"

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I told him. "If I might, I'd like to go now, before the sun gets too hot."

"I quite understand. I'll send a man to look after you." He came to the tent door and called a soldier, to whom he gave some instructions. The man nodded, and we went down to the beach.

"You bashful, or something?" the soldier asked with a grin, as I hastily stripped.

"Not particularly. Why?"

"My orders are not to let anyone come near you."

"Take care of my clothes. I may be gone some time."

A few minutes later I was beyond the shallows, striking out for Tenedos.

* * * * *

I didn't need to feign exhaustion by the time I reached the island. I gave a highly circumstantial account of myself as a Samothracian fisherman whose boat had been taken by sea-raiders — I'd had plenty of time to elaborate the details during my four hours in the water — and the islanders treated me very kindly. I was clothed and fed, and the wound on my head newly dressed. The beard I had allowed to grow since my return from Egypt I now removed, and I would have defied even Idomeneus to recognize me in the loose simple clothes of the fisherman to whose hut I had been taken. There were a good many Achaians on the island, which was used for the healing and recuperation of sick and wounded; too many for me to reveal myself. Although the islanders were generally sympathetic to Troy, they would have sold their fathers for a gold ring.

The point of going out to Tenedos, rather than landing somewhere on the Ilia coast, was to make sure of reaching

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Troy before the morrow's assault. If they had thought my recapture worth the trouble, the Achaians could have sent mounted patrols along the coast; without clothes or arms I stood little chance of coming to the city.

There were small boats in plenty at Tenedos. Abastes had taught me something of navigation by the stars, and I had little doubt of reaching Troy well before dawn. By nightfall any search they had been making for me would have been abandoned, and the farther beaches should be clear.

Pielus was unlikely to worry about me. He couldn't swim, which was why I'd left him. He'd no doubt guess where I had gone, and make his own plans accordingly.

I slept until late evening. Feeling much stronger, I went down to the shore and glanced idly along the line of boats, marking one that seemed manageable by a single pair of hands. She was a small coracle, drawn well up on the sands, but not so far that I couldn't slide her down to the water, though probably with some effort. There were a good many people about, both islanders and Achaian wounded. As I waited for darkness, a ship came in, laden with more from yesterday's battle. I watched with idle interest. Then suddenly choked back a laugh — almost the first man to land was Pielus.

He looked about him, uncertain where to go. While the wounded were being carried ashore nobody seemed to care much about an odd prisoner. I strolled close, humming an old song to which we had often marched in Egypt. Beyond a single swift glance at me he took no notice, but turned to give what help he could to the injured Achaians.

When all were landed I strolled away; Pielus unostentatiously followed, at some distance, until we were concealed from chance eyes by a point of rock. When he came up with

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me, "Menelaus said you were drowned," he said, with a grin. "At least, that's what he told Agamemnon and Idomeneus."

"So I suppose they pitched you into the sea after me?"

"Not exactly. Idomeneus said the way the wind was setting, you'd probably be washed up somewhere on Tenedos, and sent me to look for you. He also gave me your axe, in case you wanted it buried with you."

That made me laugh. I could imagine Idomeneus' face as he said it, not a flicker of a smile.

"We're going back tonight, Pielus," I said. "I've chosen a boat, with a sail and a pair of oars; she looks handy. We'll give the darkness half an hour."

"Wake me when you're ready," Pielus grunted. "I see I shan't have much sleep tonight. We do get about, don't we?"

"Won't anybody be looking for you?"

"Not until their skins are full of wine. We shall be gone by then."

The influx of Achaians and the coming of night soon cleared the beaches, but it was quite dark before we silently unhitched the little boat and pushed her off. There was almost no wind, but we made fair progress with the oars. As the night deepened, however, a brisk breeze sprang out of the south-east, and rapidly freshened. I presently had to abandon hope of making the Ilian coast within reasonable walking distance of the city, and set a course, as well as my sail would allow, for a more northerly point where we might find horses. Pulling hard on the right-hand oar to check the boat's tendency to run full before the wind, I was soon very tired. And then the wind dropped as suddenly as it had arisen.

We lowered the sail, and started to pull on an easterly course, but dawn began to pale the stars while we were far from the nearest beach. I cursed freely: a voyage that should

have taken two hours at most had already lasted six, and the assault would have begun. With the growing light, moreover, there was more chance of being picked up, and having to answer awkward questions. We were outside the patrolling area of my own ships. We set our teeth and plugged at those damned oars, but the wind still refused its aid. As we stopped to breathe, I looked about me and saw, to my dismay, two long galleys bearing down on us from the north.

For almost the first time in my life I began to despair. They were sea-raiders' boats. But a few minutes later I was standing up, shouting and waving wildly; for in the galleys I had recognized the bronzed faces of Cloanthus and Sergestus.

"The very man we were on our way to meet," said Cloanthus, into whose boat we had been hauled. "As soon as we heard about the war — we were deep in Scythia, and it wasn't long ago — we made back for Troy, leaving the boats at Abydos. Deiphobus told us what you were doing at Nex and sent us to join you — your fleet, rather. Of course, he knew you'd been taken. What are you doing out here?"

I told him in a few words. "I want to be in the last fight," I said, "and it's well going by now. I'd hoped to be there when it started."

"We muster about a hundred between us," Cloanthus said, doubtfully. "Not many. We can't very well get into the city, and we're not strong enough to do much in their rear."

"We might, if we — I think I have an idea." I explained what was in my mind, and his eyes gleamed. He called to Sergestus, pointed, and we set a course for the Achaian camp.

* * * * *

It was nearly noon by the time we reached the fringe of

the battle for the city. The camp had been deserted, and we had put on some armor of Achaian fashion, of which we had found plenty, owing to their losses.

On our arrival we mixed unnoticed among the archers who were shooting up at the defenders. Things were looking serious for Troy. The horse had somehow been dragged to the wall, and the Achaians had established a foothold around its head. They had lost heavily; the ground was thick with wounded and dead, thrown from the walls or hit while pushing the tower into place. But they were enlarging their wedge, their purpose obviously being to win a passage to the nearby gate and let the main force in. The attackers, though, were tiring, and there seemed to be no great enthusiasm for mounting the tower.

I kept my men carefully in its shelter, and as soon as we were able led the way into the covered entrance. As the Achaians on the stairs mounted and merged we followed them up. Cloanthus with the rearguard blocked the way in seeming innocence for those Achaians who seemed inclined to come after us, until from entry to exit the tower was full of our own people. Then, with a fierce yell of "Ilion!" those of us at the head poured out and took the astonished Achaians in the rear. For a while the Trojans paused uncertainly, suspecting a trick. Then Paris — in the very front of the defenders — shouted: "Achates! Oh, well done! Up, Troy! They're in our hands!"

Pinned between us, the Achaians fought desperately, but without reinforcements from the tower were overwhelmed. Those who would not surrender were cut down, and the threat — a serious one, for a time — was averted.

Within the tower some twenty or thirty men were holding the stairs and entry. They were hard for the Achaians to come

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at in that restricted space, and were doing good work with their bows.

Deiphobus, sweating and bloody, pushed his way to me with an outstretched hand. "I don't know how you came, Achates, but by the god of battles! you came in good time. If they'd taken that gate . . . Who are these men with you?"

I explained.

He looked at the tower thoughtfully. "So long as it's against the wall it's a danger," he said. "I want it pushed away. If we can hold the ground about it long enough to remove the chocks, it wouldn't take much to send it rolling down the hill."

"Can you send some chariots out from another gate?"

"Yes. The western gate isn't being seriously attacked. I'll send out two detachments, to come round in opposite directions. As they charge, could your fellows make a sally and do what's wanted?"

"I'd like cover for them while they get in again."

"You shall have it. We'll open this gate. But be as quick as you can." He sent for Polites, and explained his plan.

Polites grinned at me. "No sooner do you come in than we send you out again," he remarked. "But we're quite glad to see you, really. Come and drink with me tonight."

"Go and stir up your blasted chariots, or he won't be able to," Paris said. "Anyway, he's drinking with me first."

With a smile and a wave Polites ran off, and I went back to the tower.

Presently, Paris shouted down to me, and I yelled to the two boys at the bottom of the stair. With a roar and a whirl of swords and axes they leapt into the Achaians. Simultaneously the chariots came crashing in from both directions, and we poured from the tower. We tugged and heaved and

strained at the great chocks, every moment seeming an age, while arrows whistled among us, whirring into the hides of the tower until it bristled with feathered shafts. The chariots wheeled and tore among the Achaians, confusing and disordering them until the last wheel of the horse was freed.

I stood up and waved, and we pushed and kicked and pushed again until the great structure began to move. With shouts of warning and apprehension the Achaians in its path turned and scattered. With momentarily increasing speed it ran down the slope, crushing all in its path, lumbering like some primeval monster to its wallow. The chariots made a last sweep, and in the confusion turned back to make us a rearguard as we re-entered the city.

"And that," said Cloanthus, "is that."

For the rest of the day the assault went on, but it had lost its drive. The failure of the horse, upon which such high hopes had been set, seemed to have disheartened the Achaians. At times an attack would flare up here or there, and the rams for a while batter at one of the gates, but no serious threat developed.

The night came darkly with heavy gray clouds scudding before a rising wind. Contrary to their usual custom the Achaians remained before the city, clustering most thickly about the tower. They seemed to be working on it; probably to strengthen the timbers and wheels strained in its unchecked rush to the lower ground. Whether they meant to take it back to the camp, or renew the assault next day, we couldn't be sure; but Deiphobus kept oil barrels blazing on the walls, so that the tower could not be brought back without being seen. It was well into the night when at last the Achaians went back to their stronghold, leaving the tower alone and deserted.

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Deiphobus and a small group of us watched from the wall as the last Achaians left. We were all very tired, and found little to say. The cold wind had chilled us.

"So the war is over," I remarked. They stared at me. I suddenly realized that they didn't know. "While I was in the Achaian camp I heard that if this assault failed, Agamemnon was going to withdraw."

"Likely enough," Deiphobus said. "This attack was the most determined they've ever made, and came nearest to success."

I explained what Menelaus had told me.

Aeneas stared at me rather queerly. "Who told you they would withdraw?" he asked.

"Idomeneus. I was his prisoner, remember."

"You seem to have been on very confidential terms with him."

"I have known him since — oh, before you were born."

"I didn't see him in the fighting today." Deiphobus slapped his thigh. "I knew there was something at the back of my mind," he said. "That first batch who came from the horse; I'd have expected it to be all their best men. We wiped them out. But did anybody see anyone we know?"

There was a short silence. Then Glaucus shook his head.

"It hadn't struck me before," he admitted, "but I've not seen any of the principal leaders all day."

"I wonder where they were?"

"Looking for Achates," somebody suggested; and they all laughed.

"They missed him, then," Paris observed. "By the way, if they've finished with the tower, why did they spend so long on it before they went?"

"Let's go and see."

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The idea was taken up with enthusiasm. We took torches and walked all around the great gaunt tower. I suggested burning it forthwith, but it stood directly to windward of the city, and, as Polites pointed out, the smoke and smell from all those burning hides would have caused a revolt among the townsfolk. Also, there was a real danger from flying sparks. By this time quite a number of soldiers and the more daring citizens, women among them, had emerged from the city and were examining the horse with curious interest. For some reason the Achaians had barred up the entry but with Deiphobus there, none was daring enough to break it in.

"Well, what shall we do with it?" Paris asked. "Push it over and let it break itself up?"

"It's very robust; I doubt if it would," Deiphobus said. "And we're all too tired to start smashing it now. Glaucus, could your Lycians harness some cattle to it, and pull it through the gate?"

"If it'll go," Glaucus said, doubtfully. "It's fairly wide."

But when we measured it, we found that there was a hands-breadth or so to spare; how were we to know that it had been so designed?

Glaucus went off to find drovers and cattle, but when his mission became known hundreds of eager Trojans and their allies clamored to Deiphobus for leave to handle it through. Deiphobus laughed. "If that's how you feel," he said, "do, by all means!"

In a very short time ropes had been fixed and the great tower began to lumber slowly up the hill to the wide-open gates. "To Athene!" somebody shouted, and the cry was echoed and repeated amid wild exultation. "The temple of Athene! An offering to the goddess of victory!" Within the

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city hundreds more swelled the clamor, and willing hands were laid to the ropes. It was a queer and somehow rather terrible sight: the Titanic monster, its head high above the roof tops, moving slowly between the houses and up the hill to the great temple that crowned Troy with majesty; jerkily, ponderously advancing until, in the glow of innumerable torches, it must have been visible even to the Achaians in their stronghold.

Theano, with her attendant priestesses, waited with solemn dignity at the gate of the temple. Priam, having been told what was toward, had hastily improvised a short ceremony. In the name of the victorious army he dedicated the tower to the high goddess of Troy, Pallas Athene, as token of gratitude and devotion. Theano replied with becoming formality, accepting in the name of the goddess, and commanding that henceforth the tower, being sacred, should be left within the temple precincts, safe from the unhallowed curiosity of the vulgar. Her word was absolute, and the citizens of Troy returned home, slightly disappointed, but on the whole greatly pleased with their night's work.

"What about that drink you promised me?" I said to Paris. "I want to hear about Menelaus."

As we went back to his rooms in the palace he repeated what I'd heard from Pielus. "If the Achaians really sail tomorrow, we shall have you to thank," he said.

"Say rather your inspired handling of Menelaus. It was a stroke of genius to let him go."

Paris laughed. "If you could only have seen him, Achates!" he said. "He scuttled off as if all Troy were after him."

"We shall soon know if they're really going. It must be almost dawn."

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Paris yawned. "If they do," he said, "I suppose I'll have to see about going to Egypt. I wonder if I can get there before Menelaus — and whether Helen really wants me to?"

"There's only one way of finding that out. Go and see."

"She may have forgotten me by now. It's over two years."

"You have remembered her."

"Yes. But — somehow this war has changed my views on many things, Achates. I feel as if I've grown up."

"Are you trying to tell me that your love for Helen was just a boyish whim?"

"No, far from it. I still love her, but — with less confidence. I'm afraid she will have got over me."

"You won't have much time to spare. Menelaus will no doubt sail for Egypt without going home."

He nodded. "I suppose that's quicker than going overland."

"You can have the pick of my ships from Nex. I'll have to get them home, or they'll be turning pirate for want of other occupation."

Paris stole a glance at me. "You're doing all you can for me — and Helen, aren't you, Achates?" he observed, dryly.

"You very well know why. I'm leaving for Ida as soon as I'm sure the Achaians have gone."

He was silent for a long while. Then, "Poor Oenone," he said, softly. "I've thought a lot about her lately. They were good days on the mountain. I — I hope you will be as happy."

"And you, with Helen. I'd come to Egypt with you, except that we could hardly take Oenone."

Paris laughed. "Hardly fitting, is it? Besides, you've done enough for me already. I owe you a lot, Achates."

"The debt, if any, is about to be repaid . . . a thousand-

fold." I glanced at his bandaged arm, and grinned, "Odd to be wounded in the same place on the first and last days of the war," I remarked. "Is it anything much?"

"Only a graze from an arrow; not very deep, but rather painful."

"Who dressed it?"

"Cassandra. She's rather good at elementary surgery. If she combined with Oenone's knowledge of herbs, they'd do well together."

"Let's hope all need for such things has passed — in Ilion, at any rate. I'm for bed. Your arm will probably be easier after a night's rest."

He yawned widely. "So will the rest of me," he grinned. "Good night; I don't need to wish you pleasant dreams."

I had been asleep a very short time when a sound of wild cheering awoke me, and my servant came running into my room.

"We've won the war!" he gasped, his eyes wide. "The Achaians have gone!"

I turned over, and stretched comfortably.

"I thought they would," I said. "Don't let me be disturbed until noon."

Chapter Fourteen

I AWOKE WITH A FEELING OF DEEP CONTENTMENT. THE war was over, the Achaians far on their homeward journey. Today I should go to Oenone, never to part from her again. I had her promise, and Paris' word. Nothing stood between us now. A few hours at most, and all my waiting, and heartache, and hopeless dreams, would be no more than a somber background to heighten the radiance of my joy.

I bathed and dressed with especial care, packed what I needed, and ordered a chariot, with some spare horses, to await me at the southeastern gate while I made a last call at the palace.

I took leave of Deiphobus first. I will not record what he said to me, let it suffice that I am proud to have earned such words. Aeneas and Creusa wished me joy, and gave me messages for Oenone. Then I went to see Paris.

He was still in bed. They told me that Cassandra had brought Priam's own physician to look at his arm. I went in, and was shocked at the change in him. He looked half dead. He smiled up at me, though with an obvious effort. His brow was wet with the agony in his blood.

Cassandra drew me aside. "He's very ill, Achates," she whispered. "I think the arrow must have been poisoned. We've done what we can for him, but I am afraid. I am

going to tell my father and mother how bad he is."

The physician had redressed the wound, and departed, looking anxious, with a promise to return in an hour.

I sat down at the bedside. Paris had closed his eyes, and his mouth was twisted in pain.

After a long time he looked up at me. "Still here, Achates?" he whispered. "Why aren't you on your way?"

"I'd rather stay until the physician has been again."

Paris moved his head slowly from side to side. "He doesn't know what to make of it," he murmured, and smiled wryly. "I don't think — I shall see — Helen — again."

"Of course you will! You've not had a serious wound before. Make up your mind to beat it."

"The arrow was from the bow of Philoctetes. I fear it was poisoned with the hydra-blood. And for that there is — no cure —"

"Nonsense! Oenone once told me there is no poison but has its antidote . . ."

Paris looked up at me, a curious expression in his eyes. I read their message, and set my teeth.

"Shall I fetch her to you?" I said, though it nearly choked me.

Paris shook his head. "There isn't time," he breathed. "She has waited so long — she always knew I would come back . . . Take me to her, Achates . . ."

* * * * *

I prefer to pass over the next few minutes. Paris had fallen into a swoon, and I stood looking down at him, struggling with all the Furies in Tartarus. What black temptations assailed me, how strong their foul impulse, none but my own heart will ever know.

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In time the tumult subsided, leaving me shaken, bewildered, and trembling. Of course there was only one thing to be done, and my chariot was waiting. Ironical that the Laomedonian horses, seed of those I'd won on his success at the games — his funeral games — should now be the means perhaps of saving his life . . . and blasting my happiness in the moment of achievement. That would amuse Anchises.

I wrapped him hastily in skins and cloaks, and, flinging a wild curse at all the gods and destinies that be, carried him down the street to the chariot, heedless of the protest and questions of his people, who ran beside me like dogs yapping at the heels of a bear.

Glaucus was there, talking to Pielus; he let out a roar of laughter as I approached. "Whom are you kidnapping now, Achates?" he bellowed.

I couldn't speak. I laid Paris in the chariot, packed him carefully about against the jolting, and signed to Pielus.

"Why, it's Paris!" Glaucus said, in astonishment. "He looks bad. What are you doing with him?"

"Saving his life — fool that I am!"

"But — where are you taking him?"

"To Oenone. You remember her, Glaucus? The girl I had hoped to marry . . ."

"Why to her?"

I signed to the man who held the horses.

"She alone can save him. And she has the best right." As the car leaped forward — "She loves him!"

The last I saw of Glaucus was a pair of staring eyes and a jaw half-dropped. A moment later we were through the echoing gate, and flying down the slope as if the Furies were at our heels.

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I remember little of that whirlwind ride. We stopped only once to change the gasping, foam-flecked horses. Pielus, crouched behind me, holding Paris' head, had not spoken. He broke the silence now.

"What shall I do with these?"

"Let them go."

"But they're almost priceless — "

"Let them go!"

"I could easily leave them with — "

For the first time in my life I struck him. He made no complaint; there was no reproach even in his silence. But when the chariot bounded forward again, and the changed horses, freed of their weight, followed of their own accord, I thought I heard him chuckle. I bit my lip; there was rage and black despair and murder in my heart.

Automatically I drove, something outside me controlling the flying horses, keeping them ever toward Ida; while my spirit, no longer part of me, yet one quivering agony more exquisite than the poison in Paris' blood, endured the uttermost torments of Tartarus.

Flying hooves and flashing manes; the jolt and leap of the chariot as it bounded forward, now breasting a rise, splashing through a watercourse, or ringing through a stony valley: these I seem to recall, as a half-faded dream. Onward, our faces ever towards Ida. Onward, to the death of my hopes, more swiftly than if love had waited to crown my journey. Onward, with the dying man in the sheltering arms of Pielus, moaning a little in his pain, but still and helpless; all his trust in me. Onward, while the sun made a red glory of the west, and over Ida a star shone palely blue. Onward, as the gray dim veils of night fell softly, shrouding the beauty of

the nearing hills. Onward, past the gaunt ruin that once had been his home, until Achilles passed that way; where, as a boy, he had lain in the arms of Rhodope, and heard the step of Archelaus at the door. Upward, now, where no chariot had ever passed; crashing and reeling along well-remembered ways, between ghostly trees, past leisurely waterfalls. Till through the deepening gloom a faint gleam shone: a torch held high above a fair, beloved face. The swift chariot fronted the last long rise, and came to rest. The horses panted heavily, the quick breath steaming from red nostrils, wild eyes white and slender limbs aquiver.

I was suddenly aware of being very cold, very cramped, and very tired. Oenone ran to me; she saw the ghastly pale face in Pielus' arms, and her eyes were aflame.

"He has come home, Oenone," I said; and my voice sounded infinitely weary.

I like to recall that for a moment her eyes met mine, and in their lucid depths I read a tender deep compassion. She spoke no word, for what was there to say? But that short glance was burned forever on my memory, and will go with me until I die.

We laid him on her low, long-lonely bed. A cauldron was set above a crackling fire, and soon she knelt beside him, smiling a little, serene, confident and unperturbed.

"There is yet time," she said, "and he will live. But oh, Achates! had you been another hour — !"

I smiled wearily. What might that hour have meant to me!

Oenone worked in silence, for her ways were her own. I gave what help I could, but something more than human seemed to be in those deft fingers. Soon the horrible wound was cleaned and bound, and she smiled triumphantly at me as she poured a red deep liquid into a bowl of wine.

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"This is my magic, Achates," she said, happily. "The distilled learning of my father, and my own. See! it is the color of blood — and of life." Her soft voice rang with exaltation; her sweet face was transfigured as she raised his head in her arms and held the cup to his blue lips; the torch and firelight gleamed golden in her unbound hair.

Paris stirred, and opened fever-bright eyes. At sight of her they widened in wonder, and he smiled — a slow, tremulous smile of utter content. Oenone leaned over him, murmuring low as a dove in high branches, or a mother to a new-born child; her face was flushed and radiant with a great, deep happiness. Something seemed to choke me as I looked on them. Fool! ever to have believed that she —

His lips moved. Oenone bent lower yet to catch his whisper. She alone heard, but I saw the word they framed.

"Fair love — sweet love — come to me at last . . . Helen!"

A crash, and a wild cry. Oenone crouched like a trapped animal against the wall. The drugged wine spread slowly over the floor like flowing blood from the shattered bowl; and in her livid face was madness.

"Take him away!" she gasped, in a choking voice. Her eyes were staring, and her body shook.

I strode across to her, and caught her hands. "Oenone, you cannot let him die!" I said, fiercely.

Rigidly she faced me, her head held high and scornful.

"Let Helen heal him," she said, "for I owe him no more."

And before I could stay her she was gone.

* * * * *

I leaped through the door. Only the horses and Pielus. "Which way did she go?" I yelled.

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Pielus straightened slowly, and slowly turned. "Who?" he asked.

"Fool!" I shouted. "Oenone! She has gone!"

Pielus regarded me strangely. A queer expression crossed his face, to be replaced by a look of dogged obstinacy. "I don't know," he growled, turning again to the horses. "I didn't see her."

I flung a bitter curse at him, and ran wildly about the silent cottage, calling through echoing trees. But only the mocking tinkle of water on flat stones answered me.

Frantically I ran back to Paris, looking anxiously into his face. He was unconscious, and that last smile still lay upon his lips; but there was a gray pallor in his skin; and his nails were blue. Scarcely he seemed to breathe.

The shears were open about the slender thread; the terrible fingers closing . . . What was I to do? If only I could find Oenone's drug —

Feverishly I searched, but vainly. I held a cup of wine to his lips; it trickled down his chin, but he could not drink. My brain was reeling; I was dazed with weariness and turmoil.

From the doorway Pielus spoke, with strange dispassion. "Is he dead yet?"

I shook my head.

He came in, and pursed his lips as he looked down. "Very near the end," he muttered. "Beyond all human aid."

I nodded dully. "Beyond even Oenone's, now."

"You sound almost sorry," he observed.

He shrugged, and contemplated the dying face. "Her dreams didn't lie, after all," he said. "But why did she leave him to die?"

"He took her for Helen."

Pielus grunted disgustedly. I looked down at the pallid head lying on my arm. For a moment the passing life flared, as a spent stick in a dying fire will flame, before it falls to gray ash. His eyelids fluttered, and were raised. In the dark eyes were sanity and recognition as he looked up at me and tried to smile.

"Where are we?" he whispered.

"Home, Alex. Home at last."

He closed his eyes. "Home!" he breathed. "And Oenone — will make me — well." He sighed contentedly. "For a while — I have dreamed — " His voice faded, and he fought for breath. With a last effort he opened his eyes and smiled at me.

"But all that is past," he whispered, "and I have come back — as you advised, Achates . . . "

A long look passed between us.

His eyes closed gently, but the faint smile lingered on his lips. "Achates — faithful — heart . . . " he breathed.

And with that sigh his spirit passed to the place of shades.

For a long time I stood staring down into that calm, still face. Death had been kind. The years had fallen from him, and I might have been looking on the sleep of Alexander in those earlier days when I first knew him, and Oenone. Many thoughts and memories hovered about that head. It seemed almost as if my life began in this house, years ago, when I first learned to love that name whose music had sounded thenceforth through my dreams.

Here, then, was the end of a life that might have been glorious save for dreams and superstitions. Here lay the prince of Troy, heir to Ilion, beneath the roof of a herdsman's hut, in the dark of a winter night; forsaken by her who loved

him best; with none to ease his passing but me, who had good cause to wish him dead. Dreams! the vain mockery of credulous minds! This pitiful thing a brand to burn Troy? The war was over, the Achaians gone. The promise of Aphrodite — what had it profited him? Three days and nights on a storm-tossed sea; then the shame of Pharaoh's court; and a lifetime of longing and defeated dreams. Was this Oenone's vision, of love triumphant after years of loneliness; this the return for which she had set aside my heart? How the high gods must laugh!

I do not know how long my deep abstraction lasted, for Pielus sat in a shadowed corner, leaving me to brood alone. My weariness seemed to have unlocked many memories. Bright suns glowed, and green leaves whispered through my thoughts; many faces smiled or wept; voices echoed; laughter rang. I knew nothing of the black, cold night and the awful stillness of death that was the background of my visions. Even the steady hiss of rain outside, and the dreary moan of a rising wind lost meaning. My memories seemed more real than life itself. The fire had burned low; Pielus moved, and put some more logs on the graying hearth.

"What are we going to do with him?" he muttered.

"I suppose — take him back to Troy."

"But not now?"

"No. Oenone will come back."

"I wasn't thinking of that. It's hours since you've eaten; and after that drive —"

"I'm not hungry."

He busied himself, while I sat on a low stool before the replenished fire. Presently Pielus set food before me, and, as he had foretold, I was glad of it. Afterward he settled himself in a corner and went to sleep. In the flame and glow

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of the fire my dreams came back to me, and the long hours passed while I waited for Oenone.

I knew she would come. There was none left, now, but me. Tonight she was enduring all that a human heart can bear; like a wounded animal she had gone to suffer alone. But the last link was broken, when she came back it would be to the shelter of my arms.

Perhaps it was better thus, if he had lived she would never have been wholly mine. For a while her heart would be sore. I would deal with her very gently, wooing her from her sorrow with love and tenderness. She had lived here too long. I would take her to Egypt; teach her to laugh among gay flowers in pleasant gardens; show her color, light and beauty; show her the splendor of Memphis, Thebes and Karnak, Pharaoh's court, the Nile at sunset and under the stars, when heavy-sailed boats glided with music upon the broad leisurely water. Make her known to friends who would love her; to Pharaoh, to Meri-mentu. All her grief would be forgotten before we came back to Ilion, if we ever came back at all; Paris no more than a dream, shot through with sunshine and dark. I would give my life to her happiness, finding my own in the light of eyes no longer sad.

I went to the doorway and looked out. The rain had ceased, but a heavy mist veiled the dawning light. The empty chariot showed gaunt and desolate. I heard, but could not see, Pielus tending the horses beneath the farther trees. A still, gray, ghostly dawn, wet with celestial tears, as if the skies had wept for Paris' death, and Oenone's grief.

She came slipping down between the great trees, moving with the grace and silence of a dryad. She was very pale, her eyes wide and heavy. It went to my heart to see the sorrow and remorse in their depths.

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"I was mad, Achates," she said. "Let me go to him."

But I stood before the doorway, looking sorrowfully down at her.

She put a hand to her throat, and uttered a gasping cry. "He's dead?"

"Yes."

She bowed her lovely head. Better — far better — had she poured out her sorrow in tears; but she faced me, her great eyes bright and dry.

"Tell me, Achates; did you bring him, or —"

"He asked to come."

"So you brought him; and I — failed him."

"At the end he spoke of you. His dreams had passed; his love for you had never died."

"But because he spoke of Helen, I let him die."

"Don't grieve for that, Oenone. It is all past, now. He knows what was in your heart. Let me comfort you. There is much left in life; grief is for a night, but the day will come again."

She shook her head slowly. "Not for me," she said; and oh, the desolate sadness of her voice! "I let him die when he might have lived. I thought I could love him in spite of Helen. But my pride, it seems, is greater than my love."

"I will take him back to Troy. Pielus shall stay here with you while I'm gone. When I come back, the clouds will begin to break, Oenone; and you will awake to a new life; a new, lifelong love."

She put her hands in mine. "My heart is numb and frozen now, Achates," she said. "In time it may be as you say. Let me look my last upon him, then do with me as you will. But if . . . Achates . . . your dreams are not fulfilled . . . re-

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member that my love was given to him forever . . . and forgive me — if you can . . . ”

Almost she broke down; almost. But instead of taking her in my arms I let her go, before the bursting tears rained from her anguished eyes. Blind — blind — blind!

The door curtain fell behind her and swung idly. I went to Pielus and told him to harness the chariot for Paris' return to Troy; also to take good care of Oenone while I was gone.

He nodded, and glanced curiously at the cottage. “Is she still inside?” he said.

“Yes. Saying good-bye.”

“Oh!” He shot a swift, dubious look at me. “You should have gone in with her,” he said.

“Why?”

“Women are queer creatures. Go now, quickly; she may — need you.”

I stared at him, and turned to the cottage. The curtain hung quite motionless. Within there was no sound.

“Oenone!” I called; then again — “Oenone!” Nothing but utter stillness. I leaped through the doorway, my heart stricken to ice.

She was lying upon the bed, curled against him, her head upon his shoulder. A faint, contented smile curved her lips; upon her pallid cheeks long lashes lay piteously still. I knew she was dead before I touched her. In an agony of grief I knelt at her side — and cried out in utter anguish.

For there, beneath her lovely breast, gleamed the hilt of the knife in her heart; a golden hilt, shaped in the form of mummified Osiris, Lord of the Dead.

Some light seemed to darken in my mind. I sank to the floor beneath the weight of a heavy cloud that bewildered me. Pielus came running in, his face lined with concern. All this

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I remember as in a dream, I knew nothing, felt nothing; longed only to lay at her side, and leave her nevermore. I do not think I remembered that she was dead, only that I had lost her; and that only thus could I keep my dream — the shadow of happiness that had been my sun. And then my eyes closed, and on my mind the darkness deepened into night.

* * * * *

I must have lain a long time in a dull stupor of spiritual lethargy more terrible than any weariness of body I have ever known. From the utmost height I had been plunged into abysmal depths, and I lay shattered. My broken spirit no longer drove my mind, and my body lay like a rudderless ship, wallowing in the trough of a dark and evil sea.

It was late afternoon when I roused myself. Pielus stood above me, wan and anxious. He had lain me near the fire, and wrapped me warmly in skins — alas! those two still, covered figures would need them no more! As I sat up he lifted a bowl of warmed wine to my lips. He was frowning fiercely, and muttered something, but the words choked in his throat. Then — I confess it without shame — I put off my manhood, and broke down utterly.

He tried to comfort me, with rough, inarticulate words, his arm about my shoulders while deep, tearing sobs shook me, and all life seemed one black grief and bitter emptiness. After a time the weakness — call it so, if you will — passed, and I went to the spring to bathe my burning head. The mists had cleared, the rain gone; a watery sun was falling toward the west.

Osiris setting in Amenti

Oenone was in his arms; Oenone was dead. And my heart with her. As it has been through all the long years since.

Chapter Fifteen

SO ENDS THE STORY OF MY ILL-STARRED LOVE. THERE HAVE been both pleasure and pain in reliving days long past, when I was young. The years have healed my wound; I can recall without grief that fearful day when it seemed that life could hold no more. I look forward, now, to the time when my years are full, and my spirit goes singing to the shades, seeking the beloved face that has been my sun, my star. If I find her, I shall be content. Paris may be there, her heart still his; but if they give me a place at their side where I can look on her forever, I shall ask no more.

I might have joined her, years ago, upon that very day, had it not been for Aeneas — and Antenor. Without remark Pielus had given me the knife, scrupulously clean, and wrapped in some fine linen he had found. And for a time, in the heaviness of my sorrow, I was deeply tempted. I stood outside the hut, looking unseeingly to Troy, when through the failing light I saw a movement on the lower slopes. I called Pielus, and we strained our eyes. It seemed as if an army were making their way to the mountain, but slowly, and with no flash or glint of arms.

“Some of the Dardans going home,” Pielus said. “No more need for them in Troy.”

“But why to the mountain? Very few of them live upon it.”

“We shall see.”

We waited until they came into sight upon the rising ground below the cottage, and went to meet them. There were men, women and children, all weary, spiritless and dejected; some were wounded, others weeping quietly. At their head a litter was borne upon the shoulders of six men. Beside it walked Aeneas. He was stained with travel, and a bloody bandage was about his head; his face was white and grim, and relaxed nothing of its severity as we approached. A small head poked from the litter and surveyed me. A moment later little Iulus scrambled out, with a cry of "Achates!" But Aeneas restrained him; the child looked up in some surprise. Aeneas stopped.

"I thought perhaps I'd find you here," he said. "I suppose Paris is dead?"

"Yes. But I don't understand . . ."

"Don't you?" He smiled queerly, bitterly; then, turning to his followers: "Seize that man, and hold him fast."

I was never so surprised in my life. But as the Dardans advanced scowling on me, I leaped upon Aeneas, and put my knife to his throat.

"It matters no more to me if I live or die," I said, between set teeth, "but, by the light of heaven! no man shall handle me until I have learned the meaning of this nonsense!"

Aeneas recoiled before the blazing fury in my eyes; in truth, I think I was possessed, for I shook uncontrollably, and at the least move would have plunged the knife in his neck. But the voice of Anchises from within the litter recalled me.

"We've had enough of blood and murder; put by your knife, Achates. Aeneas, bring him to me," he said, in a weary dispirited voice very unlike his own. Feeling slightly foolish I went to the litter with Aeneas.

"So Paris is dead?" he said. I nodded dumbly.

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"Then the line of Priam is extinct; and I" — he sighed heavily — "am king of Ilion."

"Anchises! What do you mean?"

"That Troy is sacked, and burned, and ruined; Troy is no more. And I am the king of its ashes."

I turned to Aeneas in bewilderment. "Then these —"

"Are who remain, seeking refuge on Ida; for they have no other home."

"But who did this?"

"You should know."

I clenched my fists. "Aeneas," I said, "for the second time you have suggested dishonor in me. The third time, as there is a heaven above, I will surely kill you. Tell me what is in your mind, and let us be done with this foolishness."

"Do you deny," he said slowly, "that you knew that Agamemnon and all the chiefs of Achaia were concealed in that tower when we dragged it into the city?"

"Good God!"

"Do you deny knowing that they would emerge, when Troy, heavy and drunken with rejoicing, lay sleeping undefended? Or that the Achaian ships, having sailed no further than Tenedos, would return by night? That someone — and I will ask you whom, presently — would unbar the tower, and let the Achaians out, to seize the Scaean Gate and admit the bloodthirsty murderers who had crept like thieves into Troy's shadow?"

"Anchises! Is this true? Oh, God, it cannot be!"

"Ask these poor remnants of a great nation. Look upon what your friends Menelaus and Idomeneus have left. Ask them if it is true!"

"Go on, Aeneas. These words may be your last; but I will hear your case before I kill you."

"Violence is no defense, Achates. You cannot drown the voice of justice in blood."

"Justice! What talk is this? Am I not condemned already, in your mind?"

"I trust — I pray, Achates — that you can dispel my doubts; for indeed I don't know where I can look for honor, if you have betrayed Ilion."

"Make your mind easy; let me hear the full count."

"From the time you were in Egypt," he said, in a low, flat tone, "you held Paris fast to his love for Helen, hoping thus to win Oenone. You suggested to him that he should fight Menelaus, hoping that he would be killed; you even kidnaped Menelaus in the Achaians' camp, with the same purpose. You conspired to drive Priam from the throne, and lead me to it through the blood of my cousins, so that you could dazzle Oenone with the splendor of a position great as Paris' own. Can you deny all this?"

A great light dawned upon me. I would have spoken, but he raised an imperious hand.

"You carried on a secret correspondence with Idomeneus, after the confederacy had been summoned. The war could have been shortened by months, had you not teacherously killed Achilles —"

"I?"

"You were seen with the bow in your hands, struggling with Polyxena."

I began to laugh. Aeneas looked at me in some surprise.

"Go on," I said. "When I have answered you, I will take my scabbard to you, as I did when you were little — for daring to doubt me! Oh, Aeneas, what a fool you are!"

"Why?"

"I'll tell you presently. Is that all the catalogue, or has any been missed?"

"Last — and perhaps most unworthy — you took Paris from Troy when his life was in danger. Took him a journey of hours, when he required the highest degree of skill to save him, when every moment was precious. His death is on your head."

I had nothing to say, without betraying Oenone.

"Do you deny it?"

"No."

Aeneas turned to Anchises with a weary gesture. "Let him answer, if he can."

Anchises beckoned me nearer. "Achates," he said. "I have known you longer than my son has lived. I put my trust in you, I have never known you fail. Answer, now; but on peril of your life, let it be the truth."

I gathered my thoughts. "I have not to answer you, nor Aeneas. These charges were made by Antenor."

Aeneas made a quick movement of surprise, for which I had been watching.

"You have asked me who unbarred the tower and destroyed Troy. I do not know. But if it was the hand that helped Diomedes and Odysseus to steal the Palladium, and unbarred the gate for them then, I will tell you that it was — Antenor."

"Have you proof of this?" Anchises said, quickly.

"I saw it done." I explained what I had seen, and how my memory had unaccountably failed to retain the incident until long after.

"But why did you not speak then?" Aeneas demanded.

I turned and regarded him steadily. "Would you have believed me, against his word? Would the king have believed

me, against the word of Theano, Hecuba's friend?"

Aeneas was silent at that.

"Who," I went on, "commanded that the tower should lie undisturbed in the temple precincts so that it could not be examined, even by Deiphobus?"

"Theano," replied Anchises, at once. "I thought it strange at the time; and I was not alone in my surprise."

"But you said nothing about it. You can hardly blame me, then, for keeping silent my own suspicions regarding the Palladium. Antenor summoned me before the war began, and invited me to join in a conspiracy to overthrow the ruling house, if war could not otherwise be averted. He offered me wealth and position; what are these to me? Or to Oenone, who, even when she was Paris' wife, preferred this humble cottage to the palace of Troy? Antenor misjudged us both when he offered such a bait. I refused to have any dealings with such foulness. I trusted your honor, Aeneas, more than it seems you've trusted mine. I told him some truths which I recall with deep satisfaction."

I paused. They made no comment. But it was clear that I'd made an impression. After a while —

"I make no secret of my love for Oenone. I have loved her since I first knew her. I admit freely that Paris stood between us — in life, and after. His death would have brought me no nearer to winning her love — although for a time I deluded myself Never, by the least act or word, did I come between them while they were man and wife. When Paris divorced her on his return from Egypt, I told him, as I told Oenone, that I would give my life to winning her. I admit that I held Paris to his love for Helen; but not to serve my own ends. Knowing what I did of them both — for I have seen Helen — I was convinced that theirs was a

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great love, an everlasting passion. Now, I am not so sure. Be that as it may, it had no effect on my loyalty to Troy."

"Or to Paris?" Aeneas said.

"It is a black lie," I said, very deliberately, "to say that I hoped that in fighting Menelaus, Paris would be killed. He was fully the equal of Menelaus in fair fight. In my own opinion, better."

"I know little of these things myself," Anchises said, "but that, I think, is generally agreed."

"You have spoken of my friends in the Achaian camp. I had only one. It is true that Idomeneus sent me a letter, after the confederation had been invoked. It was harmless enough; I can't produce it, but perhaps Antenor can. He bribed one of my servants to steal it. He would have shown it to you, be sure, if it had been at all incriminating."

"Even so, by your own account, you were on very friendly terms with Idomeneus while you were his prisoner," Aeneas observed.

"Why not? Should I have been melodramatic, and refused scornfully to share the tent of a man bound to me in ties of blood and battle — a man who had saved my life, as I once saved his? Neither he nor I allowed our personal feelings to come before our duty — except that we would not cross swords. But then, you will remember, neither would Glaucus and Diomedes; but nobody thought of calling them traitor. Pielus will tell you how we escaped with Menelaus. Idomeneus had no hand in that." Involuntarily I grinned at the recollection.

"I am dying to learn the details of that affair," Anchises remarked, in a ghost of his normal manner.

"It will make good telling for a winter's night. Regarding Achilles. Paris shot the arrow that killed him; he didn't

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know I was there. Who saw me with the bow in my hands, where he had thrust it while he rushed out to secure the body? Again, Antenor. Paris turned his own vile plot against him; I knew of it, but it was none of my concern. It was my hope to meet Achilles in battle, but the command to which Deiphobus appointed me precluded it. But what if I had killed Achilles? Was that more foul than Antenor's plot, not only to use Polyxena as a snare, but to sacrifice her to that mad, blood-lusting dog? For that's how he meant to shorten the war, Aeneas. Did he tell you that?"

"That was not how he put it."

"I believe you."

"Of course, Antenor is not here," Aeneas remarked, pointedly.

"That's hardly worthy of you, my son," said Anchises, gently.

Aeneas flushed, but made no reply.

"Antenor will not dare to face me," I said, "after the vow I swore to him. Tell me, where is Antenor?"

"I do not know."

"If he is not dead, I will find him, wherever in the world he hides his face."

"And what will you do with him, Achates? Can he bring the dead to life, or build again Troy's shattered stones? Let him be."

There was a short silence. Then, very seriously —

"One thing remains, Achates. You took Paris from the care of the physician —"

"You knew, I think, Anchises, of Oenone's skill with drugs. The physician was completely at a loss; the poison was outside his experience. It was a desperate chance; Oenone was my only hope. I took Paris to her — at his

own request — on the day I hoped to make her mine; when by leaving him in Troy I knew he would have surely died. Was that treachery, Aeneas? If so, to whom? Glaucus saw me at the gate; I told him what I was doing. He will answer for me.”

“Glaucus is dead.”

“Oh!” I bit my lip. I hadn’t many friends; alas, how few they were grown! “But Cassandra: she will tell you how ill her brother was — how urgent the need.”

“Cassandra is dead — or worse.”

I threw out my hands. “Is there no end to it?”

“You see why someone has to be called to account, Achates.”

I sighed heavily. “I don’t know why I trouble to justify myself; except for my name, which is all this war has left me. But why should I care even for that? I shall have no son, now, to bear it. Perhaps it would be better that I should die, if somebody must make expiation. I have no wish to live.”

Aeneas regarded me curiously, his hand reaching out for little Iulus’ fist.

“What do you mean?” he asked, more gently.

“Come with me. No, let Iulus stay behind. What I have to show you is for no other eyes than yours.”

I led him to the cottage, and drew back the cover from the still shapes on the bed. Aeneas looked down at them, and at me.

“She killed herself. Her love was greater than life. Here, at her side, I swear by the love I had for her, that what I have told you is the truth.”

Aeneas bowed his head, and laid a hand upon my arm.

“Achates,” he said, “forgive me. I was out of my mind.

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But — from this day we must sustain each other.” His voice broke a little. “For Creusa, too, is dead”

* * * * *

When the Achaians had gone we scoured Ilion for the scattered survivors of that holocaust and brought them to Ida, busying them in building, collecting herds, restoring communal life through crafts and trade and labor. Anchises ruled from Antandros; I brought him my ships from Nex; and in a year or two we began once more to lift up our heads.

For a long time the ruined Troy lay deserted and silent; none had the heart to revisit the shattered city. But as children grew to manhood we planned anew, and set to building a greater Troy, as Priam had shown the way so long before. The work was heartbreaking to those who had known the earlier city; so many dear associations clustered around those heaps of tumbled stones. For some time, too, we went in fear that the Achaians would come back, to hold the power of Ilion in the dust of its ruins. But as news of them began to reach us we found that they were in no case to sail again for Troy.

Agamemnon was murdered upon his return by Klytaimnestra, a sister of Helen. Cassandra, too, poor child, died at that fury's hands; for she had been taken by Agamemnon, and had tried to warn him. Odysseus came penniless to Ithaca, and had a good deal of trouble to reimpose his kingship. He was the only Achaian, by the way, whose wife had not been unfaithful while her husband was away on a war concerning Helen's chastity. Diomedes found himself dispossessed, and sailed from his native Argos, never to return.

Menelaus had gone to Egypt, but none knew with what result.

Many held that the curse of Athene lay upon Achaia, because of the stolen Palladium, the sacrilege of the horse, and the profanation of her shrine in Troy, where poor Cassandra was violated on the night of the sack by Aias of Locris. I record with pleasure that he was shipwrecked and drowned on the homeward journey.

It was clear that the war had brought little profit to the Achaians. Their power as a fighting confederacy was gone; for a generation at least we had no more to fear from them.

Within five years we were living in the new Troy; in ten we found it hard to recall the earlier city we had known so well. Young Iulus had grown to be a fine young man, and Aeneas decided that it would be good for him to see something of the world, particularly the nations bordering the Middle Sea, before he settled to a life of responsibility and ultimate kingship.

We had many strange adventures on that long and leisurely journey, in the course of which Anchises died and Aeneas won a charming wife; but it is not my purpose to recount them here.

I began this story in idleness, to bring again to life the scenes of my youth and happiness. But now my tale is told, and I lay it aside without regret; for I tire easily with the weight of years.

I look from the windows of my old home near Ida to the mountain, where, from the stones of a humble cottage, I have raised a simple tomb. Sentinel pines stand about it, and flowers that Oenone loved. They lie together, he and she. When my time comes I shall be laid at their feet.

Sometimes I think it will not be long, for my dreams come

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pressing close, and the earth seems to lose its sharp reality. The veil is shaken, now and then; almost I hear a voice I loved, and see again a bright face long entombed, forever young, changeless, and fair

* * * * *

But I must not weary you with my dreams. As Pielus often tells me, I talk too much.

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